

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness:

Revealing the 'Me' Behind the Mask.

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A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness: Revealing the ‘Me Behind the Mask’.

Abstract

This thesis explores possibilities for understanding hidden gifted learners better and for creating environments that engage these learners through opportunities to learn within their areas of interest. I present three students and their teachers as case studies and use a collaborative process for change to negotiate possibilities for engaged learning. This collaborative process for change is a framework for reflexive inquiry. It explores the use of Problem Based Methodology (Robinson & Lai, 2006) to frame conversations that lead to the negotiation of learning pathways with hidden gifted students, teachers and their Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour. Through collective, critical reflection and analysis of identified theories of action (Argyris & Schön, 1978), learners, teachers and resource teacher gained a deeper understanding of the social and emotional characteristics of hidden gifted and the way inclusive practices influenced engagement.

The understandings that have emerged from this research are grounded in collective praxis. Praxis is informed by reflexivity, a process of describing, informing, dialoguing and reconstructing. It is a process of disequilibrium whereby praxitioners (Mayo, 2003) are critically aware and in tune with multiple ways of knowing, seeking inclusive understandings and practices that continually challenge personal beliefs and values. In this way five outcomes have emerged from this research. Firstly there has been a developing possibility for untangling the complexities of engagement through reflexive processes for identifying and mapping action theories. This mapping is respectful of voice and enables the emergence of pathways for transformative change. Secondly, there has been an emerging understanding of reflexivity and how reflexive processes contribute to change. Thirdly we have explored the dynamics of re-engagement for hidden gifted learners. Fourthly there has been the emergence of a process for facilitating collective praxis to engage teachers and learners in reflexive processes for shifting thinking beyond the descriptive to more informative and

transformative reflection. Finally, the participatory action research methodology guiding this research has emerged as a possibility for a framework of practice for RTLB. This framework may resolve issues of philosophical difference related to inclusive paradigms and positions RTLB on a learning trajectory toward praxitioner research and the development of a critical pedagogy.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis borrows the metaphor of the “me behind the mask” (Gross, 1998, p. 167) and it is a continuing voyage of discovery. The research story began as an attempt by a Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) to facilitate a deeper understanding of hidden giftedness through a collaborative process for change while working with teachers and hidden gifted learners. It evolved within this context to be a critical analysis of change and praxis for engagement.

The context for this research has been my work as a Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour and the partnerships I have with hidden gifted learners, their teachers and families. Hidden gifted learners present concerns about engagement and motivation for teachers and parents. A central focus has been to facilitate connections with each other through a richer understanding of hidden giftedness and the complexities of teaching and learning partnerships. As a practitioner researcher I gathered the raw material for the story within our conversations as we described, reflected, informed, negotiated, and initiated actions for improved engagement. This story of our learning journey is a kete woven with our threads of life experience and holding our pebbles of thought. The story describes the complexities of engagement and hidden giftedness and outlines an emerging understanding of collective praxis as facilitated by an RTLB praxitioner.

I began with the intention of exploring, through action research, a way of enabling the voice of hidden gifted learners and for facilitating classroom practices that were responsive to the learning needs of the hidden gifted learner. I believe that current classroom practices are focused on fitting the learner to the system rather than adapting the environment to the learner’s learning characteristics and needs. To explore the complexities of the teaching-learning partnership and the dynamics of engagement, Problem Based Methodology (Robinson & Lai, 2006) is used as a framework to guide the participatory action research cycle. Understandings gleaned from conversations were organised to form theories of action and analysis of these theories of action revealed dimensions that contribute to hidden giftedness and

disengagement. Critical reflection on our theories of action led to negotiated actions and implementations. These negotiated actions were informed by voices from the theoretical world related to teaching and learning and led to further exploration of motivational theory, creativity and giftedness.

My perspective within this research has been shaped by critical theory (Giroux, 2004; Wheatley, 2007, 2008), critical pedagogy, (Freire, 2005) change theory (Fullan, 2007; Senge, 1990), complexity theory (Kuhn, 2008; Mason, 2008) and organisational theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978). I position myself within a participatory/cooperative paradigm (Heron & Reason, 1997) but I borrow from critical and constructivist paradigms. I view knowledge to be subjective, situated and collectively constructed within communities of inquiry or communities of practice. The validity of these socially constructed understandings is a function of their practicality and the way in which they lead to actions that transform thinking and challenge hegemonic practices while moving toward inclusive outcomes.

My understandings of giftedness are multidimensional and are shaped by the Columbus Group (1991) and Gagné's (2009) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent 2.0.

The Columbus Group defined giftedness as

Asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counselling in order for them to develop optimally.

This definition has guided my practice and my focus in working with gifted learners to better appreciate their heightened intensities and qualitatively different inner experiences and I acknowledge that these inner experiences are only to be known through the voice of the gifted learner. In the spirit of Gagné (2009), I view giftedness

as potentiality to be developed within a supportive environment, to be shaped toward talent and productiveness. Gagné's differentiated model for giftedness raises the possibility of hidden giftedness as gifted learners who have experienced less than favourable environments for the development of talent.

In 2003, I was privileged to part of a three year Ministry of Education Talent Development Initiative as a lead teacher in an urban primary school. This school had a strong history for providing for the needs of gifted learners and had identified a group of 'challenging learners' who were not meeting their potential. These learners were challenging because they did not conform to the patterns of the classroom. They resisted work either passively or with more aggressive noncompliant behaviours. In close partnership with learners and their families we developed a negotiated learning programme to facilitate their engagement. In 2007 I joined a team of Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour with a similar role to facilitate learning opportunities for hidden gifted learners across a cluster of schools. Both positions have enabled me to form close partnerships with these gifted learners and gain a deep understanding of their social and emotional experiences. It has been my privilege to work with these beautiful individuals and I feel a heavy responsibility to enable the sharing of their stories, to honour their potentialities and generate a better awareness of their different experiences. This is their story.

To tell their stories, I use varied forms of narrative: poetry, conversation, and creative description, in conjunction with the formal style of a research thesis. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) identify us as story telling organisms who lead storytelling lives and I believe these informal narratives acknowledge more accurately the spirit of partnership experienced in the research. I am mindful of voice and in particular the absence of student voice in most educational research and therefore the research has been designed to be inclusive of student voice so that it is positioned beside the voice of the teacher and RTLB. I am also mindful of my voice and the implications of imposing my background, my reading, my passions, my agendas through the writing of our research story. With this awareness, I openly declare my position and offer moments of spontaneous impressions alongside conversational snippets and considered reflection in an attempt to relay voice and to expose the way we each construct our world. I believe that we can only know something through our own eyes

– we can hear another’s perspective, but we never know it. Therefore I present my knowing of the situation and I use personalised emotive language deliberately so as to share my experience as closely as possible. I am not saying that this is the way it is but this is the way I experienced it. I offer it for the reader to interpret further. These are my pebbles offered to the reader’s kete (basket) of understanding.

The first pebble to land in my kete in preparation for this research was gleaned during a conversation with a teacher and a colleague. I had been invited to the conversation because of my experience of working with gifted learners. The focus of the conversation was how best to meet the needs of a learner who was angry and noncompliant in the classroom. My colleague had recognised him as possibly a hidden gifted learner.

The teacher sat barricaded in by her own body. She was articulate, clear in her understandings, firm in her direction. He was a naughty, disruptive, socially immature little boy and he needed shaping with firm boundaries, consistency and strong modelling of appropriate behaviour. Talk ping ponged back and forth.

She described behaviour, we described giftedness.

She described a reaction; we described excitabilities and sensitivities of a gifted child.

She described a situation; we described gifted insights, perceptiveness, sense of right and wrong.

She spoke a story and we shared the same page rejoicing in new revelations as she began to relate the complexities of giftedness. The teacher no longer barricaded herself in. She relaxed and opened to new ideas and insights. She paused and observed that it was as if she had put on new glasses and now she knew what was to be done. She left armed with electronic kits, batteries and confidence. (Reflective Journal, March 2008)

Two months later after a follow up meeting to review the individualised educational plan for this learner I record a further entry in my reflective journal.

I sat as part of a large group of teachers, school managers, Resource Teachers of Learning/Behaviour all readying ourselves for an Individualised Behaviour Planning meeting. The child concerned was not present but his mother was. She sat self consciously, a little edgy watching the group. She would advocate for her boy. I tried to assess the vibes in the room but it was difficult. As the teacher spoke things began to soften, the air was filled with glowing reports of an active learner who played a key role within the classroom. He was responsible for novelty, interesting concepts, learning passion. His peers were curious they sought his expertise and they celebrated his learning. We talked briefly about incidentals and set another date for the next individualised behaviour planning meeting. It was never to eventuate as he was engaged the teacher understood. (Reflective Journal, May 2008)

This story was the model of practice that inspired the research. I wanted to replicate the way that the conversation had changed the thinking and practice of the teacher so that I could observe the effects this had on engagement for hidden gifted learners. This was a conversation that worked and it had started the process of unmasking a hidden gifted learner so that he could be the creative, motivated learner that he was. This conversation led to change and growth for both teacher and learner. It became the pebble that landed in my kete inspiring possibilities for a collaborative process for change.

The research story became a collection of pebbles, gathered from a range of sources and representing different perspectives about learning, teaching and giftedness.

Chapter two describes the many pebbles gathered from the literature about giftedness, underachievement, disengagement, transformative change and praxis. It represents the academic voice and leans toward a critical perspective.

Chapter three outlines the methodology. These are the pebbles collected from action research that guided the development of the methodology as a collaborative process for change.

Chapter four describes the story of Dexter –A grey boy lost in a grey world. Dexter and his teacher placed pebbles initiating a deeper understanding of creativity, complexity and change.

Chapter five introduces Ricky – Adventurer extraordinaire and his teacher. Their pebbles inspire the exploration of excitabilities (Dabrowski, 1977; Piechowski, 2006) and reflexivity (Smyth, 1992) as catalysts for change.

Chapter six tells the story of Finn’s and Rachel’s partnership for learning. It highlights the power of partnership, negotiation and the role of reflexivity for active learning.

Chapter seven explores further the concept of engagement and what makes for engaged learners. Four components of engagement are discussed and a model for engagement is offered to support the unravelling of complex learning situations.

Chapter eight connects research insights to hidden giftedness and offers possibilities for revealing the “me behind the mask” (Gross, 1998, p.168) hiding potential giftedness through processes of collective praxis.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In recent years there has been a paradigm shift in conceptualisations of giftedness in response to deeper insights into the complexity of intelligence and diversity of giftedness. Matthews (2009) identifies that theories about giftedness are moving away from the categorisation of some learners as gifted toward a focus on individual differences in development trajectories. This shift recognises that pathways to high level achievement are diverse, domain specific and incremental. Changing conceptions of intelligence outlining the complexity of intelligence and recognising multiple ability domains support this need to acknowledge academic diversity in gifted populations (Guilford, 1967; Sternberg 1984, 1997; Gardner, 1983; Cattell, Horn & Carroll, 2009). Meta-analysis of gifted literature also identify that the young gifted population is a varied group representing every ethnic and socioeconomic group and exhibiting an almost unlimited range of personal characteristics in temperament, risk-taking, conservatism, flamboyance, introversion, extraversion, persistence and organisational skills. No standard pattern of talent exists among gifted individuals. Reis and Renzulli (2009) argue that giftedness is not a fixed entity and is developmental, linked to high potential and evident at certain times, under certain circumstances, with appropriate levels of support, time, and effort. Dweck (2009) differentiated between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset when thinking about giftedness. In a fixed mindset some students are categorised as inherently smart and some are not, while in a growth mindset intelligence is seen as dynamic and as developing over time with appropriately scaffolded opportunities to learn. A growth mindset has fewer limits on who might be gifted and is more accommodating of diversity, it acknowledges environmental and intrapersonal factors as being influential on high level performance and is responsive to identified needs to progressively develop expertise. Gagné (2000, 2009) represented the complexities of growth from potential to talent in his Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent. He proposed that talent was the end result of a long process of progressive transformation facilitated or inhibited by intrapersonal and environmental catalysts. The concept of hidden giftedness emerges from a growth mindset. Hidden giftedness is linked to concepts of underachievement and is representative of developmental understandings

of giftedness (Matthews & Foster, 2006). It is aligned to talent development literature which informs practical education-based definitions of giftedness (Tannenbaum, 2003).

Traditionally, discussions of underachievement are reflective of a fixed mindset, focusing on the identification and measurement of intellectual ability. Research into underachievement with a fixed mindset is concerned with measuring discrepancies in expectations of potential given a measurement of ability and current levels of achievement (Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Rimm, 1997; Siegle & McCoach, 2005; Whitmore, 1982). Fixed views of giftedness emphasise genetic causality and seek psychometric instruments to measure such ability. Dweck (2009) criticises this fixed approach to measuring intelligence on the basis that recent research on brain plasticity shows that many measurements of intelligence can be changed with appropriate training and she claims that nothing can measure intellectual potential.

Hidden giftedness is a term used to describe masked potential and current thinking about hidden giftedness seems to be reflective of a growth mindset. For hidden gifted learners, high ability is often unrecognised because learning opportunities and environments have failed to trigger high level performance and have contributed to dysfunctional intrapersonal characteristics. Delisle (1994), Montgomery (2009), and Olenchak (1999) recognise accompanying behavioural and emotional disturbances of hidden gifted learners such as frustration, low motivation, boredom, disengagement, socially unacceptable behaviours and personal destructiveness, as being attributable to an unchallenging mainstream education and is described and as being reflective of unfulfilled potential. These behaviours and the consequent reactions to these behaviours continue to mask giftedness (Baum, Renzulli & Hébert, 1995; Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). Discussions related to hidden giftedness focus on how these learners are ill-served and how they may be better provided for with more opportunities for freedom and autonomy in their learning with an emphasis on creativity and authentic problem solving (Montgomery, 2009).

Multiple social factors have been identified as constraints to effective provisions of programmes for gifted learning needs. Gifted education is frequently criticised for

exacerbating social, economic and racial disparities (Matthews & Folsom, 2009). Processes that differentiate for advanced ability are perceived as elitist and this has been a barrier to the provision of programmes which have the potential to trigger high level performance. Stereotypic views of giftedness portray this group as overconfident, arrogant and self-centered and teachers express concerns about possible antisocial applications for intelligence (Gross, 1998; Geake & Gross, 2008). Such negative attitudes are not only restricting the provision of effective differentiated programmes but also constraining the effectiveness of professional development programs in gifted education for educators. Gifted learners have described a perceived need to moderate their intelligence so as to conform to the social and cultural expectations of peer groups and in order to gain social acceptability (Gross, 1998). Other factors influencing performance for gifted learners include poor academic self perceptions, inappropriate curriculum, negative relationships with teachers and peers, low motivation and self-regulation, low goal valuation (Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Reis & McCoach, 2000; Reis & Renzulli, 2009 and Whitmore, 1980). Gifted students may pass through the education system and remain unrecognised and hidden until leaving school when they may become talented performers as artists, entrepreneurs, trouble shooters, and business growers (Hoover-Schultz, 2005) or they may continue to become hidden gifted adults.

Gagné's (2009) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent 2.0, shifts thinking toward a focus on the complexity of what determines talent and away from untangling the complexity of giftedness. He describes intrapersonal, environmental, developmental and chance factors as contributing to the development of potential and distinguishes between aptitudes described as natural abilities in a particular domain and achievement as systematically developed skills. Gagné also describes 10% of the population as a threshold for giftedness. Gagné's model emphasises the complex interplay between catalysts in the transformation of gifts to talent and recognised that patterns of interaction between components differ from one person to the next. He identifies a fundamental causal relationship between gifts and talent but also recognises a significant facilitating or hindering effect from intrapersonal catalysts, developmental processes and environmental factors. His review of the literature led him to propose a hierarchy of effect with chance having the greatest influence on the

development of talent followed by genetic factors, intrapersonal catalysts, developmental processes and environmental factors.

Focusing on the complex determination of talent is supported by Renzulli (2002) who argues that giftedness will only be observed if children have the benefit of rich environments that afford them opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. Tomlinson and Demirsky (2000) identify that many classrooms fail to provide opportunity to nurture advanced talent as well as fail to identify many students who possess potential as learners, leaders and producers. Estimates of students with high ability who do not achieve well are as high as 50% (Hoover-Schulz, 2005). Without opportunities for these students to work with rich and demanding curriculum that can bring to the surface potential and promise, giftedness remains dormant and hidden from view. Awaya (2001) notes that “gifted abilities in a student can remain latent until a well-designed classroom environment can act as a catalyst for those abilities to emerge” (p. 180). Students from those groups underrepresented in programs for the gifted - ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged, the highly creative and twice-exceptional student - are also those who have least access to well designed classroom programmes (Borland, 2004; Cooper, 2005; Moon, Brighton, Jarvis, & Hall, 2007). Awaya advocates for all students to have the learning opportunities currently reserved for gifted students and for gifted programmes to lead the way in the promotion of excellence in classroom programmes to ensure that all minority groups have opportunity to be identified as gifted.

Another key factor in the transformation of gifts to talent is motivation. There is continuing debate about the role of motivation as an inherent component of giftedness (Renzulli 1978; Simonton, 2005; Sternberg, 2005) or as a moderator variable influencing performance excellence (Gagné, 2000; Schick & Phillipson, 2009; Ziegler, 2005). Typically, outstanding achievement includes a high level of intrinsic motivation, a sense of enjoyment and drive for further development of skills and knowledge (Schick & Phillipson, 2009). Whether motivation is linked to the environment, personality traits or intelligence, it is a key to uncovering and fostering hidden potential. Motivation is the ‘motor for intelligence’ and allows students to use their intellectual ability to full advantage while increasing intellectual skills overtime (Dweck, 2009). Motivation is connected to effort and effort is a distinguishing factor

in predicting outstanding performance (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Using evidence from the life-long efforts of expert performers who continuously strive to improve and reach their best performance, Ericsson and Charness (1994) identified that the central mechanism needed for superior performance is the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and skills. They observed that to attain the highest levels of performance, it is necessary to specialise and engage in an activity full time for an estimated ten years or more and they concluded that outstanding performance is the product of outstanding effort mediated by acquired complex skills and physiological adaptations. On the other hand, Dweck (2009) observing child prodigies suggests that they are not just little founts of knowledge and skills but are fascinated by numbers, words or music and that the fascination possibly precedes ability. This has direct implications for classrooms that fail to spark fascination and consequently trigger the energy needed for sustained effort and motivation and may provide insight into why some gifted learners do not engage.

Marzano (2003) identified five theoretical strands in the literature on motivation - drive theory, attribution theory, self worth theory, emotional theories and self systems. These strands describe motivation as influenced by the complex interplay of physiological and psychological needs. These needs are viewed to be specific to individuals and evolve through a person's values and beliefs, perceptions and personal experiences. An individual's decisions to engage or not, are determined by mindsets formed through experiences and feedback gained over time. The way an individual attributes prior successes to luck, ability, effort, and task difficulty influences further engagement and persistence. Mindsets related to perceptions of ability and intelligence, have also been found to influence motivation and engagement (Dweck, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Learners believing that intelligence is fixed may avoid challenge or may devalue effort for fear of finding out they are not as smart as thought. While learners who believe that intelligence and ability are malleable, approach challenge with effort and perceive mistakes and failures as learning experiences contributing to the growth of ability. This growth mindset influences the motivation to engage. Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider and Shernoff (2003) conceptualise motivated engagement as flow. Flow is described as a state of effortless attention and occurs when a learner's skills match the level of challenge presented by a task with clear goals and immediate feedback. Highly creative artists and scholars

have reported the experience of flow as being pleasurable and worth doing for its own sake and often culminating in their best work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Boredom is the antithesis of motivation and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Harris, 2000). Flow theory is based on a symbiotic relationship between challenges and skills needed to meet those challenges. Tasks that are too easy become boring and consequently, tasks that involve new learning are the antidote to boredom (Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003). Breidenstein (2007) observed boredom in the classroom situation and found that "boredom" may be a powerful sign distinguishing the learner from the specific task or the whole surroundings. Being bored means being detached and Breidenstein (2007) suggests that there seems to be a tacit consent between teacher and student about the "normality" of boredom in school. Kanevsky and Keighley (2003) attributed boredom to the gradual disengagement of some gifted students and wondered at the moral impact of continuing to ignore the contributing factors to boredom in the classroom. Kanevsky and Keighley recognised that boredom was both dispositional and situational. They identified five factors as critical to boredom avoidance and academic productivity for gifted learners - a need for personal control in learning experiences, opportunity for choice, challenge and complexity within a caring environment. They also noted that the dynamic relationships between these factors are idiosyncratic and complex, evolving and changing over time. Boredom has been associated with frustration, anger, disengagement and in some cases antisocial behaviour. In classrooms it has been associated with diminished attention and it is identified as interfering with student performance and is a frequent reason for dropping out of high school (Larson & Richards, 1991). Research also suggests that a student does not have to be gifted to be bored in school but it helps (Gallagher & Harradine, 1997). A lack of challenge is the most commonly identified contributor to classroom boredom and many believe this leads to underachievement (Gentry, Gable & Springer, 2000).

Disengagement is not a phenomenon peculiar to some gifted learners but is also an issue for other marginalised groups. Disengagement is a consequence of learning environments that are perceived as boring and not motivating. Research into learning environments that have successfully engaged gifted learners and fostered advanced performance, or uncovered and triggered hidden potential, indicate that challenging

programmes inclusive of personal interests that connect teacher and student are fundamental (Baum, Renzulli & Hébert, 1995; Emerick, 1992; Schussler, 2009; Treffinger, Young, Nassab, Selby & Wittig, 2008). Positive teacher-student relationships are built on understanding and gifted students need the understanding of their teachers if their giftedness is to ever have a chance of being translated into high level performance. It is ironic that students who have the potential to learn most easily and swiftly in school are often regarded by teachers with disregard or even contempt (Geake & Gross, 2008). Geake and Gross (2008) noted that there is a general discomfort with intellectual precocity in the interest of egalitarian viewpoints and this can translate into poor teacher understanding of social and emotional needs of gifted learners and social isolation. To ensure the uncovering of gifted potential and the fostering of advanced performance, gifted students need teachers who are skilled at nurturing potential, who are able to build relationships through understanding the experience of being gifted and who respect their individuality (Croft, 2003). When time is taken to help gifted students feel accepted and respected, when students view their learning to be of value and when they believe they have the skills to succeed, these learners are more likely to use self regulating behaviours, apply appropriate strategies for academic success and engage (Baum, Renzulli & Hébert, 1995; Siegle & McCoach, 2005).

Gifted learners have their own way of knowing. They are more intense, perceptive, sensitive and excitable. Piechowski (1991) describes the experience of gifted learners as being highly tuned to the world around them and “quiveringly alive” (p. 285). He linked this to Dabrowski’s (1977) theory of overexcitability and positive disintegration. According to Piechowski, overexcitabilities feed, enrich, empower, and amplify talent and are visible as heightened intensity, sensitivity and excitability. Silverman (2007) observed similar displays of intense energy, enthusiasm, absorption in chosen pursuits, vivid imagination, and strong sensual reactions to stimuli. Tieso (2007) measured overexcitabilities and tentatively identified that gifted students are different from typical students scoring more highly in psychomotor, intellectual, imaginal, sensual, and emotional abilities. Geake (2009) summarized brain research and described giftedness as enhanced neural and sensory interconnectivity with an enhanced number of interconnections and a wider spread of interconnection to different areas of the brain. These insights support giftedness as a fundamentally

different way of processing the world and suggest the need for appreciating these alternative points of view in the way we approach their learning.

Hidden gifted learners are possibly fledgling transformative intellectuals and their disengagement may be viewed as an unconscious resistance of the status quo. Chapman (2007) explains underachievement as a conscious decision influenced by three factors –safety, smartness, and meaningfulness. It is not safe, because if their performance is not quite up to scratch then this may reflect poorly on their levels of giftedness. Teachers with a fixed mindset of giftedness are incessantly seeking evidence to measure ability and gifted children often feel the pressure of continually having to prove themselves. Delisle and Galbraith (2002) also identified that gifted children perceive that parents, teachers, and friends expect them to be perfect all the time. They are continually walking the tightrope of acceptance and fear being judged negatively by other classmates. It is not smart to be gifted because when the work is boring and completed there is only more of the same – zoo chow for caged cheetahs (Tolan, 1996). If work is completed and completed well then there is often more pressure to continue to perform and to do more than everyone else. It is not meaningful because activities are often insufficiently complex and learners cannot meet their self-expectations. Gifted learners often have a higher focus on other topics of interest outside curriculum requirements (Baum, Renzulli and Hébert, 1995). Hidden gifted learners may possibly be products of a spiritually diminishing system that fails to recognise or acknowledge their uniqueness.

Practices for engagement are concerned with supporting gifted learners and teachers to recognise and resist the disengaging practices of classroom cultures and to explore democratically formulated learning experiences that enable transformation and growth. In this way transformation is deeper than having a better understanding of giftedness or motivation, it is a fundamental rethinking of giftedness and learning which leads to fundamentally different learning and teaching practices. These are potentially critical, transformative processes that challenge mass produced education for the industrial age and open us to alternative democratic social formations of education. (Brookfield, 2003)

Baum, Renzulli and Hébert (1995) successfully used Type III enrichment (Renzulli, 1986) to work with teachers to reverse patterns of 'underachievement'. Type III enrichment described programmes that moved the gifted learner toward higher order inquiry involving authentic contexts, real audiences, internal commitment and active problem solving following processes that replicate practicing professionals. In type III enrichment students followed an area of interest. Baum et. al. described the blending of effects that occur as student engagement is transformed over time. Type III enrichment challenges regular teacher led classroom practices and explores student led inquiry. Key factors identified as influencing the success of this project were teacher/pupil relationships, support for self regulation strategies, opportunity to learn in their own area of interest, opportunity to investigate their own issues of underachievement and opportunity to work with a peer group of other gifted learners. Several teacher behaviours also emerged as important in engaging students and they included taking time to build relationships, affirmation of effort, belief in student ability and taking the role of facilitator and researcher of learning.

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) and hooks (1994) argue for an engaged pedagogy that is socio/cultural and that explicitly teaches students to be critical and socially active through practical inquiry into social issues. In this way they call for approaches that are inclusive of marginalised groups. They emphasise the wellbeing of the individual and the group and argue for education that attends to personal growth that is committed to change, and where teachers and learners strive for self actualisation together. Teachers are viewed as observers and documenters of children and researchers of learning rather than, deliverers of prescribed curriculums and practices. The challenge for educators is not to ask what is true but rather to ask what fits this situation (hooks, 1994). In this way education looks at the world from multiple perspectives and develops pedagogies that fit and include multiple learners. Education from a critical perspective supports teachers as reflective practitioners, as transformative individuals and as passionate, caring people. It promotes a process of reflection and action for both learners and teachers. Engaged pedagogy is praxis in the style of Freire's (2005) pedagogy of freedom. Praxis refers to actions which shape and change the world in ways that empower the disempowered (Freire, 2005). It is practical reasoning that begins with a question or situation and that is guided by concerns for acting truly and rightly. Praxis recognises postmodern understandings of

the socially constructed nature of knowledge and power. It implies action that is politically aware, thought that is critically informed and it requires practical judgement about how to act wisely in the given situation. Praxis is creative, other seeking and dialogical, fostering collective meaning making (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Mayo, 2003).

Negotiated learning has the potential to be praxis for engagement. Meta-analysis of current research highlights a significant association between negotiated practices and engagement with increased participation, motivation to learn, reduction in oppositional behaviour and increased opportunity for creative and critical thinking (Cornelius-White, 2007). Negotiated curriculum (Boomer, 1992; Cook-Sather, 2002) is creative, other seeking, dialogical and reflexive. It evolved from the humanistic theories of Rogers, the constructivist theories of Piaget, Dewey and Vygotsky, liberation philosophies of Friere and the experiential learning approach of Reggio Emilia. It is mindful of student voice and challenges the view of students as blank slates and teachers as sole authors of what students learn. Nuthall's (2007) micro-analysis of how students learn, suggests that learning should be authentic, personalized and student driven. Cook-Sather (2002) attributes higher levels of motivation in negotiated curriculum to the ownership principle where learners are more interested in situations that link directly to their worlds and wonders why the most directly affected and least often consulted group in policy decisions and practice are students. She also notes that when students' perspectives are included in decisions about learning this can directly improve educational practice by making what is taught more relevant to students by virtue of their saturation in information technology, youth cultural media, and political currents such as globalization. The New Zealand Curriculum Statements document (Ministry of Education, 2007) advocates for learning to be relevant, engaging and challenging and suggests a more inclusive and democratic approach to curriculum delivery. It recommends a process of community consultation and the development of local curriculum to be inclusive of cultural and social diversity.

Critical pedagogies for engagement are collective and are an opportunity for teachers and learners to work in partnership against hegemony. Education is profoundly hegemonic (Mayo, 2003), especially when teachers replicate curriculum skills and

understandings without questioning why such knowledge is chosen, without asking whose interests are represented and why learners would be interested in learning it, and without acknowledging the diversity of learners, their experiences, their interests, their multiple ways of knowing, their concerns. Practice without consciousness reinforces current domination, and perpetuates inequalities and injustices (Giroux, 2004; Mayo, 2003). By seeking out other voices, by acknowledging diversity, and co-constructing learning experiences connected to learners' experiences, interests and concerns teachers challenge their own practice, expose hidden assumptions and empower students to participate in their own self-formation. In this way learning takes on an emancipatory purpose and the active reflective processes of negotiation is more than speculation but critical transformations essential for learning (Giroux, 2004; Smyth, 1992). hooks (1994) maintains that classrooms should be places that are life-sustaining and mind-expanding places, where teachers and learners work in partnership acknowledging teacher authority and its limitations and thinking about learning together to diffuse power and domination in the classroom.

Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour are strategically placed to be observers and documenters of children and researchers of learning (hooks, 2004). Their role is threefold: to problem solve learning issues, to explore the complexities of learning within an ecological framework and to use research and theory to guide assessment and intervention decisions (Thomson, 2002). RTLB practice is analytical and empirical in approach. Through collaborative processes RTLB are expected to enable critical reflection into the dynamics of ecological constraints on learning. Teachers are encouraged and supported to explore classroom practices and to identify facilitating and detrimental effects that may be contributing to the performance of individual students. Thomson views the challenge of this process as being able to engage teachers as equal partners, knowledge generators and co-constructors in the intervention process. Participatory action research has the potential to provide a mechanism for integrating theory, research, and practice and for promoting involvement of teachers and learners in intervention efforts. In practice, the focus of RTLB intervention is instrumental involving collaborative development of lessons and assessment tools, analysis of student achievement data, and the implementation and assessment of new teaching strategies. Servage (2008) raises doubt about the sustainability of interventions with an instrumental focus believing that this keeps

teachers locked into a hypothetical-deductive mindset with relatively short-term goals. While acknowledging the positive results of collaborative approaches, she questions the long term impact of collaborative activities that focus teachers on the means rather than the ends of their work without reflection on the philosophies behind interventions. She calls for transformative approaches requiring teachers to be “willing and able to critically explore, articulate, negotiate, and revise their beliefs about themselves, their students, their colleagues, and their schools” (Servage, 2008, p. 70) and resulting in growth and sustainable change.

Servage (2008) describes school change that alters appearances and functions as reformation, and school change that is a fundamental shift in what schools are as transformation. Brookfield (2003) describes learning as transformative if it involves a fundamental recognition, questioning, and reordering of how one’s thoughts or actions are forged by capitalism. He views transformative as a sacred word imbued with revolutionary potential. Servage also argues for schools to be professional learning communities that reflect critically upon both their own actions and the social and policy contexts within which these actions are framed. Schools are viewed as possible places to identify and challenge beliefs and practices that undermine democracy and perpetuate social injustices. Within the context of RTLB work, there are possibilities for transformative change especially as our work supports often marginalised learners and challenges mono dimensional classrooms and teaching practices that perpetuate alienation and marginalisation for these groups of learners. RTLB have the potential to facilitate fundamental shifts in world views through intense critical thought and the reordering of social relations and practices for the benefit of learners who are underserved by the current system (Brookfield, 2003; Servage, 2008).

Brookfield (2003) reminds us that learners are not transformed in isolation but in partnership with others and identifies that dialogue with diverse perspectives and emerging understanding is explicit to transformative change. Problem Based Methodology (Robinson & Lai, 2006) supports this dialogical process of critical thought and potential transformation through conversations. These conversations identify underlying beliefs, values and assumptions as constraints and through critical examination identify they impact on the issue being looked at, in this case disengaged

gifted learners. This analysis leads to the exploration of possibilities for action. Problem Based Methodology has the potential to be collective praxitioner research described by Mayo (2003) as “research that is carried out by a praxitioner. A praxitioner is one who reflects on the ways in which theory and practice emerge in the present as actions that are guided in some way through the interaction of belief and experience” (p. 288). Mayo (2003) suggests that a praxitioner is subtly different from a practitioner, in that a praxitioner is constructed through discourse and emerges in and through action, sustained in community through communicative praxis. She draws on the work of Wittgenstein to remind readers that if we focus on the truth of theory we may miss the reality of the moment before our eyes. In praxitioner research “the focus of learning shifts from the need to convince others of the validity (or applicability) of particular theories (although ongoing discussions about the relevance of articulated theories remains an important aspect of ongoing discourse). The focus of learning becomes the ability to know what to do next” (p 232). “Praxitioner research is located firmly in the swamplands of practice; it is communal; it capitalises upon insights from the theoretical high ground but does not aspire to go there” (p. 288). Mayo in the tradition of Wittgenstein argues for the idea of replacing explanation with description and sees opportunity for fresh understanding through rearranging what is already known. She recognises teachers as professionals responding to complex, unpredictable and changing environments and sees the need for the creation of learning spaces that acknowledge how actions have social consequences and require ongoing critical reflection to counter the possibility of hegemonic effects. I believe praxitioner research is relevant to the work of RTLB as they facilitate praxis and work toward transformative change in special education. Problem based methodology provides a framework to enable RTLB to be praxitioners who engage in the collective investigation of classroom structures that perpetuate inequalities and injustices that result in poor outcomes for special education students. It supports the emergence of knowledge in practice and shifts the focus of research toward collective interpretation and pragmatic understandings of research processes.

In this research project I seek a process where teachers and I are challenged to explore alternative ways of working in partnership with gifted learners to build learning environments that are supportive of the social, emotional and cognitive characteristics of gifted learners. For teachers, I seek a process of transformation that awakens a

critical awareness of how attitudes, assumptions and curriculum practice maintain disengagement for these learners. For learners I seek a process that explores possibilities to unmask the gifted child within.

The areas being researched are hidden giftedness, disengagement and engagement as a collaborative process of change. I understand the component issue to be that poor understanding of the social, emotional and cognitive needs of hidden gifted learners disenfranchises these students and may contribute to their poor engagement. I propose that with better understanding of the social, emotional and cognitive needs of gifted students then teachers may be able to facilitate improved engagement. I view hidden gifted learners, their teachers and myself as having different perspectives on what is 'good learning and teaching' for gifted students and this non consensus is needed to hear missing voices and to confront hidden assumptions. I suggest a collaborative process for change as a means of improving understanding and for guiding possibilities for learning pathways that engage learners. I see the collaborative process for change as including learners, teachers and myself engaged in an action research cycle using a framework drawn from Problem Based Methodology (Robinson & Lai, 2006). I anticipate a collective investigation of attitudes, assumptions, classroom structures and curriculum practices that perpetuate misunderstandings resulting in poor outcomes for some gifted students. Ultimately, I envisage an alternative pathway for gifted learners based on negotiated practices. I believe this is praxitioner research.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This research had dual intentions of facilitating engagement of hidden gifted learners through a deeper understanding of their social and emotional learning needs and of exploring how a collaborative process for change shifted thinking and behaviour for gifted learners, their teachers and Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour. I worked from the premise that through a collaborative process for change, the learner's voice could be juxtaposed beside the teacher's voice, to confront misperceptions of hidden giftedness. In this space of partnership, I aimed to explore with gifted learners and their teachers, alternative approaches to learning and teaching that would facilitate intellectual engagement for these hidden gifted learners.

The guiding questions for this research were:

In what way does a collaborative process for change facilitate intellectual engagement for hidden gifted learners, their teachers and a Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour?

How does an understanding of the social and emotional characteristics of giftedness facilitate intellectual engagement for hidden gifted learners?

I also considered:

In what way is a collaborative process for change collective praxis?

3.1. Context

The context for this research was my work as a Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour in four schools within a large urban city. These schools served communities that were culturally diverse and included families across socio-economic groupings. The schools had in previous years participated in the Oho Ake Rangatahi programme where teachers had received professional development related to identifying hidden gifted learners. The identification process involved checklists completed by teachers and parents and interactive profiling workshops focused on social and emotional characteristics of gifted students. Learners had been referred to

the Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour service with concerns about classroom engagement. Six learners, their teachers and families were invited and agreed to participate in the research and three are reported on. These three were selected because of the completeness of the data gathered. The research was conducted in terms three and four 2008 and during the busiest of the end of year school events some final reflective interviews with teachers did not eventuate.

3.2. Design

This research is participatory action research at two levels. At the first level it is practitioner inquiry and I am an active participant in the inquiry process collectively investigating the dynamics of problem based methodology as a collaborative process for change with hidden gifted learners and their teachers. At the second level it is researcher inquiry and I am the researcher seeking to understand the concept of engagement as a complex construct within an authentic context. The information gained from the practitioner inquiry informed the moment by moment decisions in the collaborative process and worked towards facilitating engagement for both learners and teachers. The researcher inquiry sought information related to understanding the dynamics of engagement. Insights from the practitioner inquiry were foundational to the emerging understandings of the research as a whole.

Figure 1 describes the key components of the research design and how the researcher inquiry paralleled the practitioner inquiry.

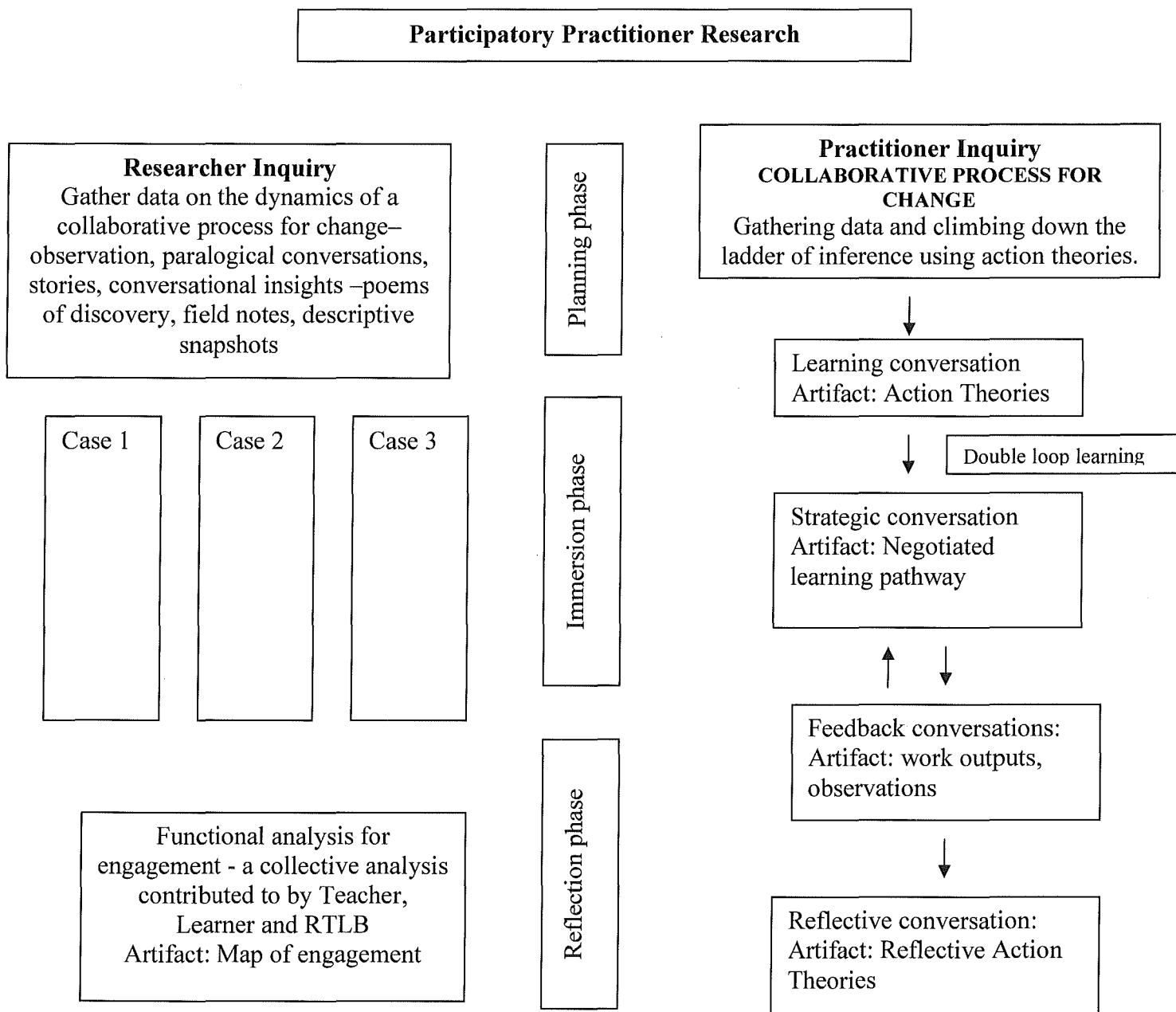


Figure 1: Diagram of the components of the research:
Research Inquiry and Practitioner Inquiry

3.2.1. Practitioner inquiry

The collaborative process for change evolved from Problem Based Methodology (Robinson & Lai, 2006), organisational learning theory (Senge, 2000; Argyris & Schön, 1978) and critical pedagogy (Dewey, 1926; Freire, 2005; Shor, 1992).

Problem Based Methodology fits under the umbrella of Action Research and in particular Developmental Action Research (Cardno, 2003). It is a form of practitioner research that empowers participants through inquiry to unravel and analyse the components of a problem and build appropriate actions to meet identified constraints. In the tradition of developmental action research this research follows a co-learning cycle, where theories and beliefs about giftedness, underachievement, and learning inform the actions of researcher, teachers and learners. Critical dialogue and reflective conversations about actions inform understandings, which in turn inform practice in a continuous transformation. Problem Based Methodology provides a framework that enables the reconstruction of the theories of action operating in a problematic situation. Through critical dialogue and the examination of these theories of action, participants identify possible inconsistencies and then co-construct alternative theories of action. Carr and Kemmis (1986) described these inconsistencies as espoused theories and theories-in-use to recognise the often noted gap between the theories that inform practice and the actual practice.

The unique feature of research using Problem Based Methodology is the emphasis on the relationship between researcher and participants. “This relationship is characterised as a learning conversation in which different points of view are respected and treated as a resource for reciprocal critique and learning” (Robinson & Lai, 2006, p. 53). The intention of the conversations is to guide and maximise open reflection and offer the possibility for co-researchers to lead. Kuhn (2009) within the framework of complexity sciences, describes this as a ‘coherent conversation’. A coherent conversation is an inquiry method adopted from the complex sciences and it facilitates emergence by accepting the entirety of topics that people bring into the conversation while also engaging in critical self reflection of the underpinning processes of the emerging understandings. In this way a coherent conversation is paralogical. I was looking for the opportunity to reveal the dynamics of how people

were thinking and why they were thinking that way, as much as what they were thinking through the conversations we were engaged in.

The collaborative process for change consisted of five conversations. Each conversation was recorded and focused on the identification and analysis of theories of action. These theories of action were central to mapping and understanding learning and teaching issues. The theories of action consisted of three components – shapers (beliefs, values, underlying personal characteristics), actions and consequences. At the same time, the theories of action became the indicators of change for the researcher inquiry as individuals adjusted underlying beliefs and actions leading to different consequences.

The five conversations included:

a. Introductory conversations. During these conversations, I discussed the aims of the research and the collective intention of the process with the learners and teachers. During this conversation, learners, teachers and researcher shared current understandings about gifted underachievement. We collectively clarified the research framework and discussed how the data would be gathered using recorded conversations, planning and work samples. I offered my support to implement negotiated learning actions and we discussed access to technology, information resources and school wide support networks. The consent forms for participating in the research were checked, questions were answered and concerns were discussed. During this conversation a process of partnership was established.

b. Learning Conversations. The purpose of these conversations was to gather information to construct the learners' and teachers' theories of action (Argyris & Schön, 1974). The learners answered questions (appendix 7) related to what it was like at school for them and shared their perspectives on their learning, their teaching and their friendships. Teachers answered questions (appendix 7) related to their student and shared their understanding of these learners and how they catered for them within their classroom programmes. I transcribed these conversations, colour coded their statements according to emerging themes related to social and emotional characteristics of gifted learners and organized them into the components of a theory of action. The theories of action were made up of shapers, actions and consequences.

The shapers were interpreted as underlying beliefs, values, personal characteristics of hidden giftedness and teaching philosophies. The shapers paralleled the concept of constraint as identified by Robinson and Lai (2006) in the Problem Based Methodology framework. I renamed constraints as shapers as I felt this term was less negative and I didn't want these characteristics to be viewed as necessarily something needing to be changed but instead something to be accommodated. The emerging themes aligned with recognized characteristics of giftedness found in the literature on underachievement and with other gifted learners that I worked with in previous projects focused on gifted underachievers. The actions were statements of how teachers responded to the learner and how learners responded to events in their school day. The consequences were learning outcomes, achievements, work outputs, attitudes, emotional responses and feelings of wellbeing.

The theories of action (appendix 9) were presented visually as maps of the current learning situation and were shared with learners and teachers to check for accuracy. This conversation and the mapped theories of action, served to position learners and their teachers in terms of understandings about hidden giftedness.

c. Strategic conversations. In these conversations the visual maps of 'theories of action' became the focus of analysis to determine how current actions were reflective of underlying values, beliefs and personal characteristics of learners and teachers and to gauge how they contributed to engagement in classroom programmes. A formative process of analysis was built into this conversation and involved checking for accuracy, tracking for coherence within theories and between theories, evaluating effectiveness and determining areas for improvability. During this conversation I contributed understandings of hidden giftedness and modelled the processes of analysis. Implicit in the evaluation of current theories of action was the development of an alternative theory of action that defined what improved participation would look like and how we would facilitate improved participation in classroom programmes. Collectively we identified areas of success and areas for improvement and then we negotiated a learning pathway for improved engagement grounded in the identified learning needs and interests of the hidden gifted learner. Aspects of these learning pathways challenged teachers' current practices but they seemed willing to explore alternative approaches possibly because the need was clearly and collectively

identified. It was decided during this conversation that we would gather data on changes through ongoing conversations, email, and observations recorded in field notes.

d. Feedback conversations. These were conversations related to teaching as inquiry and they focused on the impact that the negotiated actions were having on engagement, learning and classroom dynamics. These conversations happened in many directions between teachers and learners, teachers and I, learners and I, and learners, teachers and I together. During these conversations we gauged change for engagement through discussion, observation and work outputs. In this way we evaluated the effectiveness of the negotiated learning pathway and made adjustments accordingly. At times the adjustments were as simple as clarification but at other times the adjustments required teaching of skills and strategies or environmental adjustments to minimise impact on other learners. These feedback conversations were critical to ongoing partnership and for effectiveness. Together we were exploring what was and wasn't working, how engagement was to be maximised through understanding of individual needs (learners and teachers) and how teaching could be differentiated to meet those needs.

e. Reflective conversations. These conversations (appendix 8) sought feedback from teachers concerning the effectiveness of the collaborative process in building understanding of hidden giftedness and how this understanding may inform future practice. It also sought learners' perspectives on how changes had influenced their engagement. This conversation was formatted as a structured interview with set questions delivered in a conversational way so that the researcher was also able to contribute her understanding of situations offering these perceptions for debate.

3.2.2. Researcher inquiry

In my work with gifted learners and their teachers I have become concerned about misunderstandings of social and emotional characteristics of gifted learners by teachers. When teachers do not have an appropriate understanding, I have often noted that teachers struggle with teacher-pupil relationships and have difficulty creating a learning environment for intellectual engagement. Schussler (2009) highlighted that managing classrooms for intellectual engagement goes beyond content to address

perceptions of respect and understanding. Drawing on my teaching background with the use of critical pedagogies, specifically inquiry based learning and negotiated curriculum, this research started with four propositions. Firstly that a collaborative process for change would enhance teacher's understandings of the social and emotional needs of hidden gifted learners. Secondly that enhanced understanding of social and emotional needs would help teachers to develop classroom programmes to facilitate engagement. Thirdly that learner partnership in the decision making processes would enhance engagement. Fourthly that modelling the process of negotiation and planning of learning pathways would support teachers to continue to meet hidden gifted learners' needs. Fig. 2 summarises the components of a collaborative process for change in a visual format.

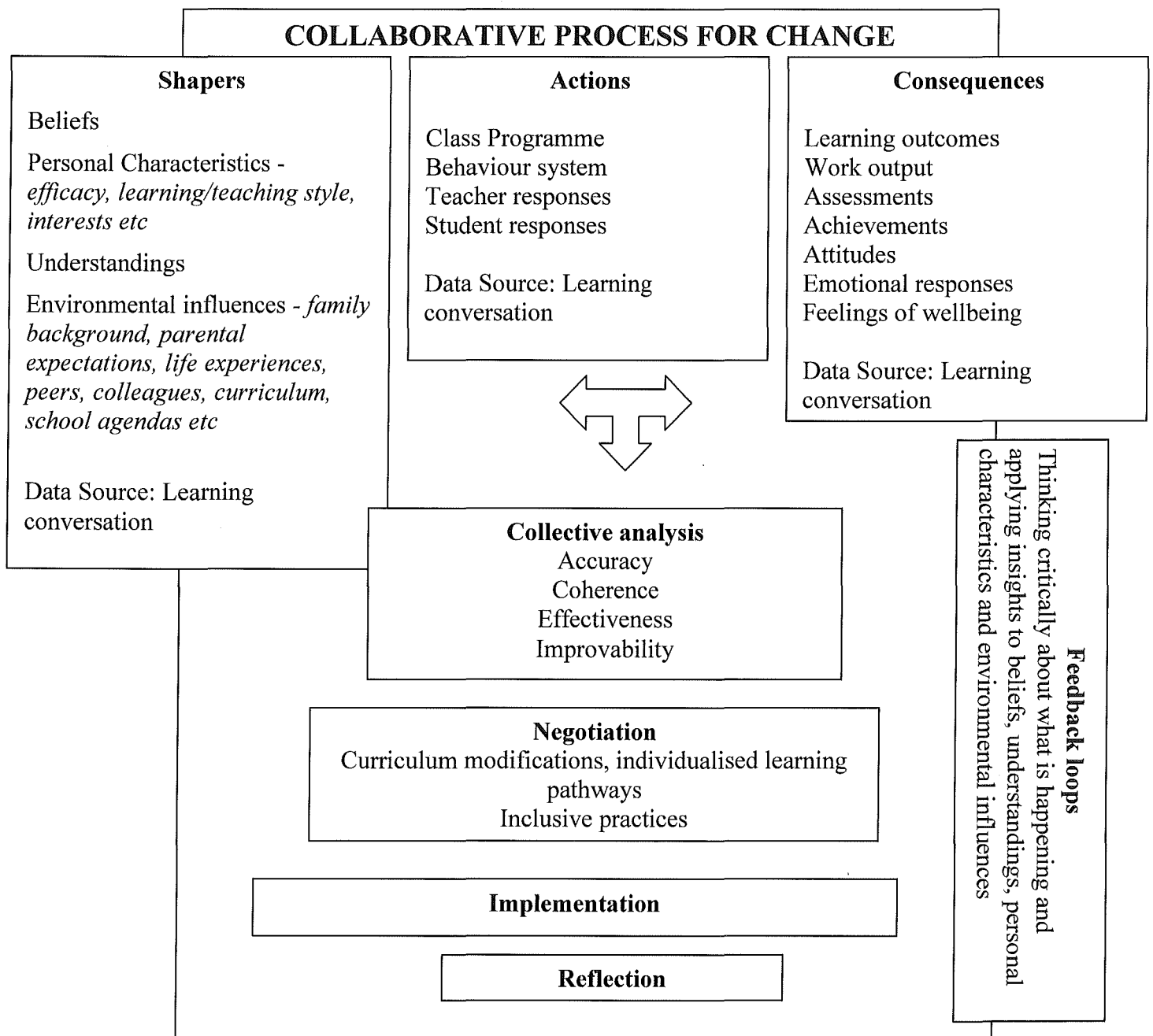


Fig 2: Model of the collaborative process for change

The researcher inquiry used case study to understand emerging insights about the complexities of engagement and collective praxis while using a collaborative process for change. Three cases were used to track the threads of change in learners' engagement and to explore the dynamics of praxis. By using three cases it was possible to identify patterns within cases and to make comparisons between cases and then offer possibilities for understanding these complexities.

3.2.3. Access

The school settings were easily accessible and were welcoming of my work. Rapport was already established prior to the research. I approached learners, their parents and teachers with whom I already had a working relationship and only one teacher declined to be involved for personal reasons. I was acutely aware of social power differentials inherent in teacher/pupil/researcher relationships and the collaborative process for change and in particular the conversational approach, was chosen to acknowledge the voice of others and was an attempt to ameliorate the possibility of learners deferring to teachers and teachers deferring to researcher.

3.3. Data

Oral stories, perceptions, observational descriptions and anecdotes formed the data for this research and I refer to this as storying (Chambers, 2003). Storying, as discourse through narrative, is an appropriate data source because stories give insight into how we experience the world as storytelling organisms, who lead storied lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). The conversations became the data for our stories. These stories capture the thinking of learners and teachers in relation to hidden giftedness and engagement while participating in a collaborative process for change.

At times our stories were captured in recorded conversations. I used conversations purposefully as I believe conversations can be shaped to be inclusive, participatory and paralogical. Conversations are inclusive when everyone gets to share their ideas. Conversations enabled me as researcher and participant, to make comments alongside others, in response to ideas shared and to offer insights from my own experience as gifted educator and understandings from my reading of the literature related to gifted education. Conversations can be participatory in that the informality enhances the opportunity of contribution from everyone and are especially less threatening for young learners who are traditionally the unheard voice in educational research (Cook-Sather, 2002). Conversations that are participatory can acknowledge and celebrate the 'organic intellectualism' (Kuhn, 2009) of individuals, while fostering reciprocal relationships that nurture critical reflection through questioning and dialogue and opportunity to build fresh knowledge. Conversations can also be paralogical learning spaces where participants deliberately seek alternative perspectives, voice ideas, own their opinions, explore harmony and discord and actively talk about how meaning is

constructed (Mayo, 2003). By having opportunity to confront ideas that are different but parallel to each other, to identify where there is agreement and where there is discord, participants can co-construct collective insights and this has the potential to provoke transformative learning opportunities for individuals.

At other times our stories were captured as reflections, where ideas and issues emerging from conversations were revisited and were informed by other points of view gleaned from readings and discussions with a wider circle of colleagues and professionals. These reflections gave space for recording moments of change in a complex system. During these reflective conversations, learners and teachers had opportunity to be active seekers in the development of their own understandings rather than mere consumers of information to be applied to practice.

And there were times when our stories were recorded as pieces of descriptive writing. These were snapshots from my field notes, written as I experienced significant moments in the research. I recorded my spontaneous insights using expressive language and metaphor in an attempt to capture the essence of the experience and to place the reader in the moment. These writings are loaded with interpretation and they are transitory but they also offer opportunity for personal reflection and connection, placing the observer and reader in the 'streetscape' (Chambers, 2003) and declaring the role, values and beliefs of the observer in that space. For this reason, I believe these writings enhance and complement case study research.

Finally I transcribed some of the recorded conversations as poems (Richardson, 2000). I named these writings poems of discovery because they were revealing. For a poem I took phrases of insight from spoken text and transposed them as lines in a poem. The words remained true to the speaker while the meaning seemed to be magnified as each phrase stood beside other phrases without the diluting words of explanation and grammatical correctness. Through the poetic form I sought to privilege and honour the often personal and insightful sharings of individual speakers. I also found that by rearranging statements as poetry, I had fresh eyes for viewing the conversational narratives and this took me beyond emerging themes and allowed me to focus on the meaning making, emotional tensions, and vulnerabilities of each participant. These were then included in the shaper component of action theories.

3.4. Analysis

Analysis of our conversations gave insight into the influences on engagement for hidden gifted learners and an emerging understanding of the crucial role of reflexivity in change.

In this way data collection and analysis occurred concurrently and was collaborative including students, teachers and RTLB/researcher. Data analysis was based on the principles of idea convergence and the consequent confirmation of findings. The practitioner inquiry followed the process of participatory action research cycles with collective reflection on current situations, questioning of underlying assumptions, planning of possible actions, implementation and experimentation supported by intensive observation, questioning, reflection and cross checking leading to the emergence of other possible actions or adjustments.

Analysis for the researcher inquiry was both a formative and summative process. Conversations were analysed for emerging themes and patterns related to the complexities of engagement and the role of teacher understanding of hidden giftedness in facilitating engagement. Analyses of failures to engage were just as insightful as analyses of engaging actions. Insights were crosschecked within cases and between cases. Some insights were fed back into the research and informed actions to improve engagement. These analyses led to the mapping of engagement. This map is not offered as an ideal or as a complete picture but is constructed as a possibility for mapping ecological complexity and for shaping future actions. Further comparisons concerning differences in the quality of change between cases informed emerging ideas related to sustainability, collective praxis and transformative individuals.

The analytical processes were designed to be open and honest with plenty of opportunities to check and cross check for accuracy of representation through multiple data sources (teachers, learners and in some cases parents), multiple forms of data (conversation, self reports, observation, and work samples) and across settings (three classrooms in two schools). Conceptual clarity and inexperience with perceptual awareness are concerns for trustworthiness and this had particular implications for the young learners in our research partnership. As facilitator I worked hard to hear the voice of the learner through checking and cross checking my

understanding with the learners and teachers. Our initial learning conversations were individual conversations with learners and then with teachers so that learners felt comfortable expressing their perceptions of current learning situations. I also presented concepts visually to support learners understanding of complex relationships and we physically manipulated statements discussing how ideas linked. As stated above, the intention of the collaborative process for change was to give voice to learners, to contrast this voice with the teacher's voice, to identify discord and confront misperceptions in a space for partnership before working in partnership to explore alternative approaches to learning and teaching.

3.5. Reporting

My goal in writing this research has been to describe the study in a way that enables the reader to feel as if they have been an active participant in the research while enabling readers to determine how findings could be applied in their own situations. I have attempted to personalise the individual stories through the words of learners and teachers while also situating our learning together in the wider context of theoretical perspectives of giftedness. Throughout the research I have declared my position frequently and shared my interest in critical pedagogy, complexity theory and feminist positions. In the interest of transparency, I have been careful to position my voice alongside learners and teachers and I attempt to use language which is invitational rather than absolute.

Within the case studies I adopted headings introduced by Winkler (2003) to describe and capture the flexible reasoning chain that is the inquiry process. This reflexive process consisted of qualitatively different moments of thought that in their simplicity are described as noticing, connecting with theory, pondering, and negotiating as we discovered emerging insights that influenced engagement.

This research is subjective in nature. The case stories are rich with the words of learners and their teachers and my sense making is presented as a reflection on possibilities. Insights are gained from the analysis of self reported perceptions. Perceptions can be specific to time and place, or reflections of emotions triggered by outlying events. For this reason I have chosen a research methodology that is descriptive and interpretative rather than explanatory. Lather (1998), Mayo (2003)

and Winkler (2003) caution how participatory action research can be a trap for reporting the status quo for self benefit or can be overly influenced by personal passions and limitations. For me, participatory action research is personal with the possibility of being useful to others. In this way the research story is offered as a possibility not as a prescription for a way of doing. I believe there is an element of transparency in the presentation of subjective stories through the use of the language of learners and teachers. I encourage readers to make links with the research in terms of their own lives, to question and reconstruct the story for their own insight and growth, to tell their own stories about how it may connect with their practice (Winkler, 2003). Our journey holds truth for us and possible truths to be discovered by others. Our journey was a process of inquiry where we made collective decisions for ourselves to free our own beings as learners and enquirers. I aimed to guide the research in a way that was respectful of others decision making in the way of Freire.

'Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence;... to alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects' (Freire, 2005, p. 85)

3.6. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was received from the University of Canterbury's Educational Research Human Ethics Committee in 2008. After gaining consent from the Principal of each of the schools involved in the research, participants were invited to participate in a collaborative process whereby they would be partners in the research. In this way I was attempting to establish a transparent research process which involved everyone from the beginning in order to expose and minimise the dynamics of power inherent in teacher - pupil relationships and participant - researcher relationships. Throughout the research journey I used processes such as the conversations to ensure that I remained true to the ideal of equal relationships through partnership. Parents of participating students were included in this consultation phase and gave permission for their children to be involved in the process. I met with each person to explain my purpose and the processes involved in the research. I answered any questions and emphasised the active role I would be taking in the research as teacher and support person.

These initial meetings were accompanied by written explanations (Appendices 1,3,5) and consent forms (Appendices 2,4,6) for students, parents and teachers. We discussed the difficulties with complete confidentiality especially since we were members of school communities where our work was visible to other teachers and children. The consent forms clearly stated that I would use pseudonyms in the published research so that participants and schools would not be easily identified. During the process of the research teachers and pupils all verbally expressed that they were happy to use their own names but I have honoured the initial agreement to use a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of other people referred to indirectly or implicated during our conversations. For example during one conversation with a student there were direct references to the principal, other teachers and friends.

Throughout the research process there was a strong element of trust between each of the participants and me. Our informal conversations had the potential for openness and at times students and teachers made comments that were meant only for me. These comments remain in transcripts because they inform the underlying shapers of theories of action but were not recorded in the theories of action unless they could be reframed so as not to be harmful. When I shared data from conversations for collective analysis I was careful to demonstrate that I was respectful of personal and professional integrity. For instance if a teacher had said a student was useless at maths then this would have been reframed as a student struggles with maths. The collaborative focus of the research was designed so that we could collectively check and cross check for accuracy during the strategic conversation. During this conversation students and teachers had the opportunity to challenge any inaccurate statements or assumptions, particularly where a statement had been reframed to be more positive. This collaborative process enabled collective analysis of data before the co-construction of actions and maximised partnership in the process.

The consent forms also indicated that participants could withdraw at any stage and that all data would be destroyed unless written permission was given for its continued use. No participant indicated that they felt uncomfortable with the research or withdrew from the research. Data were gathered for six learner teacher partnerships but only three were written about as not all partnerships provided complete data as I found six concurrent cases difficult to manage from a research perspective.

Counselling support was offered to all participants in the research. A psychologist was available to provide support if there were any psychological or social issues arising from learners and teachers exploring personal experiences. Parents were kept informed of negotiated actions throughout the research through telephone or email contact with classroom teacher and researcher. Parents were helpful in monitoring effects on students outside of school.

The activities negotiated for the individualised learning pathways had the potential to impact on other teachers in the school. At all times during the research, team leaders and other management staff were aware of the research project and its direction and these key personnel were able to monitor and mediate these impacts. I was also available to act as mediator for any conflicts of interest. Although the learning pathways were individualised, the negotiation process ensured that they were still connected to classroom learning programmes in some way.

A strong value underpinning this research was partnership. In partnership each person offers their understandings and experiences and together fresh understandings and experiences are grown. The metaphors of the kete and pebbles is an important theme in this research for understanding the commitment to this partnership and throughout our conversations I have been careful to acknowledge and affirm voice. I spoke frequently about the way we learn from each other and gave thanks for the pebbles that were placed in my kete. These are important ethical concepts because they embody equal relationships and over ride exploitative practices.

In conclusion, participatory action research is inherently ethical. It has the potential to be an ethical praxis of care where primacy is placed on working with communities. It is a negotiation process between parties who have agreed to work together to solve a particular issue (Cahill, 2007). This research embraced these underlying values and was committed to creating conditions where emerging understandings would be used by school communities for their own purposes. This research was committed to giving a voice to all participants in a way that they were heard and listened to by informing possible actions to be explored. In the same way this research is committed to offering

insight to others in way that may trigger further actions that reveal the Me behind the mask of hidden giftedness.

Chapter Four

Dexter – A grey boy lost in a grey world

He sat inside the circle but was strangely outside, lost in his thoughts, jolted by occasional questions. His hand shot up but his answer was strangely disconnected. Given his chance, other opportunities to answer were denied, his arm became limp, his responding ceased and he sat alone in thought, despondent and somehow sad. Deflated.

The teacher threw a life line, aware of my presence. A gentle reminder, an endearing term, an understanding hand on his shoulder and the warmth soaked in permeating his inner being, momentarily energising him to begin the task and slowly the grey boy blended into the grey world surrounding him.

His teacher has a strong paternal streak. He accepts and embraces the challenge to shape and mould responsible citizens. He is controlled, patient and affirming, a positive role model. (Field notes – August, 2008)

Vital statistics (Aug 2008):

Name:	Dexter
Age:	9yrs 11mths
Class Level:	Yr 5
Reading:	13yrs 6mths Accuracy: 95% Comprehension: imaginative answers
Writing:	Stream of consciousness, imaginative, wandering Twisted humour
Maths:	Intuitive problem solver Confused by verbal explanation of process Finger calculator
Passion:	Movies
Genre:	Horror
Ambition:	Actor, maybe director
Strengths:	Intuitive Perceptive Sensitive
Quote:	I want to fly to the moon. No I want to go to Saturn. No one has been there.

4.1. Insights from learning conversation

4.1.1. We notice

Dexter's learning conversation reconstructed as a poem of discovery, describes that he recognises his thinking as different from other people and that he feels good about his way of thinking. He is confident in his ability and enjoys learning. He has some perfectionist tendencies believing that his work needs to be perfect. His handwriting is painstakingly neat and his desk revolves through cycles of orderly to dishevelled and back to orderly. He glosses over weaknesses, visibly blushing when caught out and he is fluent with excuses when attempting to hide imperfections. I transcribed all our learning conversations as poems by taking phrases from the recorded conversations and positioning them as lines in a poem. The words belong to the speaker. The phrases are organised into stanzas according to content by me. In this way the message is poignant, stripped of grammatical convention and conversational ramblings.

*I'm much smarter than others
I have a special head
I know everything about school
Learning is dependent on the topic
I can do everything that I want to do
I have more imagination than others
Interested in lots of different things
The idea of gravity is cool
I only want to learn about topics
Like things that are something I care about like writing stories
Love going to the library
I want to fly to the moon, no I want to go to Saturn no-one has been there
Mostly my school work has to be perfect
Good at drawing but not professionally
Not very good at maths, not a maths marvel (top group), just good
I forget easily
I forget the bad things I do
(Dexter, Poem of Discovery)*

During our learning conversations Dexter described his passion for movies and discussed at length his favourite movies, actors and directors. As we compared our movie watching experiences we discussed his fascination for horror and action. He was curious about my interest in comedy and character portrayal. He had plenty of suggestions for movies I might possibly enjoy and he introduced me to the video shop magazine that advertised latest movies and critiqued the latest highlights. He always had an opinion on the editor's review. During a learning conversation with Dexter's

mother (M), she shared with the researcher (R) how Dexter talks about movies from the perspective of a director and how he is critical of camera angles and scene structure.

(M) He talks about these things, this is not right this is not correct, if they just move it over here. I don't even pay attention, I say yes baby yes.

(R) So it's not about the story it's about the techniques they are using in the actual video?

(M) Yes and sometimes I don't know what he is talking about but I'm sure that this is right so I just have some words that I use with him because half the time I don't know what it is because he sees what I can't see (Dexter's mother, Learning conversation)

Dexter felt misunderstood. He described his frustration with teachers who failed to see that he was intelligent. *"Most teachers don't really know that I have this sort of head. In fact they think I am stupid"* (Dexter, Learning conversation). He described the pain of watching other highly performing children being given opportunities that he was denied. He talked about the difficult cycle of misbehaviour, punishment, lost opportunity, misunderstanding that he was locked in. His words revealed sensitivity yet his actions were perceived by many of the people in his school world as insensitive.

Dexter also described his feelings of powerlessness when teachers failed to understand him. *"Sometimes I talk back to the teacher. I want to tell them off 'cause they are speaking to me in a way. I sort of want to reply and they think it's talking back and I get put in the thinking circle"* (Dexter, Learning conversation).

Dexter acknowledged that his current teacher was an exception. In the learning conversation Brad described Dexter with understanding and acknowledged his creativity and unconventionality.

*Thinks deeply
Curious
Unconventional
Full of creative ideas
Perceptive
Aware of how he is perceived by some staff*

Takes things on board a little too heavily.
(Brad, Poem of Discovery)

Brad recognised Dexter's sensitivity yet he understood it as something that needed to be adjusted not as a difference that possibly contributed to his creativity. He was willing to accommodate to Dexter's differences but preferred Dexter to fit in.

4.1.2. I connect: On sensitivities

Heightened sensitivity is described in the theoretical work of Dabrowski with Piechowski (1977) as an excitability. According to Dabrowski the excitabilities are a heightened awareness and contribute to a different experience of the world. Lind (2002) discusses the joys and frustrations that this unique experience brings to the lives of gifted individuals and advocates for the celebration of the joys of heightened sensitivity, alongside positive support for the frustrations.

Lovecky (1992) identifies passion and compassion as two aspects of heightened sensitivity. Passionate people are described by Lovecky as thinking with their feelings while compassion refers to their deep sense of caring. Lovecky suggests that gifted people with heightened sensitivity may experience increased appreciation of music, language and art and may savour tastes, smells, textures, sights or conversely may feel over stimulated and uncomfortable with these sensory inputs. Also she suggests that heightened sensitivities may make gifted learners easily distractible. She describes situations where highly sensitive gifted individuals may become irritated by an itchy sock or label or be distracted by an almost imperceptible light flickering or whispering classmates. Lovecky also notes that heightened sensitivity can translate as perceptivity and an acute awareness of others feelings, thinking or motives affecting children's ability to work in classroom climates that are not accepting of giftedness or where relationships with classmates is strained or threatening. Silverman (2000) associates sensitivity with extreme emotional reactions, low pain thresholds and low tolerance for boredom, routine or activities perceived as meaningless.

4.1.3. We ponder

Dexter's behaviour ticks the sensitivities boxes. He has an area of intense passion – movies. He has physical sensitivities – dislikes getting his hands dirty and can't stand

having dirt under his finger nails. He is emotionally sensitive and this sensitivity triggers heightened emotional responses. His emotions often get him into trouble. He is perceptive and I recall a sense of me analysing him while he analysed me. Dexter's intensity, sensitivity and perceptivity seem to be 'hard wired' in a way that makes him more engaged in the world around him. As Piechowski (1991) describes this is being "quiveringly alive" (p. 285) and Lind (2000) links the hard wiring and creativity by describing how heightened sensitivity and perceptivity are necessary for seeing reality in a different, stronger and multisided manner.

4.1.4. We notice

Through our conversations we probed for a deeper understanding of Dexter's creativity. We began to appreciate that Dexter is not creative in an obvious way. There was little evidence of creativity, just incomplete products and occasional flashes of creative thought in his writing. His teacher described him as 'unconventional,' 'impulsive,' and 'full of creative ideas.' His writing was described as having 'strong deeper features and personal voice.'

Dexter shared moments of unconventionality where his actions had been misinterpreted by others. He talked about a photo he had taken while on an environmental field trip where the class were planting beside a stream. Dexter had taken a close up shot of the teacher's butt while he was digging. *"I took this photo of his butt, closer, and my teacher saw it and deleted it, without my permission. He thought it was cheeky, I thought it was funny"* (Dexter, Learning conversation). An educational psychologist described Dexter's unusual answers to straight forward questions. He shared how Dexter's definition of an island was an elaborate account of movies where people were stranded on desert islands and not that an island was a piece of land surrounded by water. Brad confirmed similar difficulties when assessing reading comprehension. I recalled a conversation I had with Dexter about his imaginative answers to reading comprehension activities. I had described his answers as fantastical and he replied *"Yeah, they are better."* He explained that the story was boring and there was nothing interesting in it. *"I don't do boring, I don't want to talk about boring"* (Dexter, Feedback conversation). I explained how teachers need straight forward answers related to the story when they are testing comprehension and Dexter replied *"so what you are saying is that most people don't like to do boring but*

they still do it. I don't like to do boring and I don't put up with it." I inquired as to how teachers could test his comprehension and he replied *"you have to give me an interesting story. You have to let me pick the story because I know what I am interested in"* A simple answer to a seemingly complex situation.

We listened to Dexter's passion for movies and we wondered about why he had rejected an opportunity to participate in a school group invited to create an environmental movie for the local city council. We heard about Dexter's lack of autonomy in group situations and his frustrations with not being able to realise his vision for how things should be done because he had to continually compromise his ideas to include others' ideas. Brad also suggested that Dexter may withdraw to avoid the possibility of failure. He may have felt the pressure of being with other achievers may have felt overwhelmed and intimidated especially given his anxiety about others not perceiving him as gifted.

4.1.5. I connect: On creativity

Creativity is complex and hence difficult to define. Creative performance involves outcomes that are influenced by personal, social and situational factors. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) described creativity as a novel act, idea or product that is selected by the appropriate field for inclusion in the relevant domain. Sternberg (2000), Amabile (1998) and Csikszentmihalyi (1997), adhere to a global approach when understanding creative processes recognising the influence of personal and situational factors. A creative person is described as someone whose novel thoughts or actions changes a domain or establishes a new domain. Creativity is viewed as a conscious decision. Sternberg (1999) offered a broad taxonomy for viewing the act of being creative and differentiated creative acts that replicate and extend from creative acts that redirect and radically redefine. Beghetto and Kaufman (2006), Craft (2001), Gardner (1999) and Simonton (2000), distinguished between reactive creativity and proactive creativity. Reactive creativity is evident when responding to an everyday situation or problem and proactive creativity is visible in design processes that result in shifts of how people think.

Clearly creativity is not a generic concept as skills that lead to each creative performance tend to be domain specific. Haier (2008) and van Tassel Baska (2004)

agree that intelligence is needed for the acquisition of the domain specific knowledge and skills necessary for creative processes to occur. Renzulli (1986) proposes a three trait model of creativity linking above average ability, divergent thinking skills and task commitment. This is described by Amabile as the 'creative intersection.'

Haier and Jung (2008) identify that the creative brain thinks differently from others and that creative brains think differently from each other. "Some creative thinkers strive to be creative by force of will, while others experience creative insight (i.e., illumination) as if from out of the blue; most experience their creative thoughts as sometimes spontaneous, other times deliberate" (p. 175). Through brain imaging technologies Haier and Jung found that creative brains think multilaterally and function more efficiently when engaged in activities requiring divergent thinking skills as opposed to convergent thinking activities.

Van Tassel Baska's (2004) studies of creative people identified that the creative personality is distinctive and made up of characteristics like independence, risk-taking, freedom from social conventions, openness to novel, complex and ambiguous situations and flexible thought patterns. Trefingger, Young, Selby and Shepardson (2002) identified that creative people are more able to think divergently and metaphorically, dig deeper into ideas by thinking critically, have the courage and sensitivity to explore alternative ideas and are in tune with their 'inner voice' having an understanding of self, a commitment to a vision of the future and self determination in achieving this vision.

Simonton (2005) links creativity as a function of the brain's information processing system to the situational influences of gender, culture, ethnicity, socio economic and other demographic variables. Many creative people develop their creative talents independently from traditional schooling and often come from the margins of society (van Tassel Baska, 2004). It is suggested that marginal environments may foster unconventional perspectives and visions. School is not viewed as being the ideal environment for creative giftedness and Simonton (2000) suggests a curvilinear relationship between education and creativity - the greater the creativity the smaller the influence of education.

Renzulli (1986) noted a direct link between the motivational orientation brought to a task and the likelihood of creative performance. He identified that the environment has a large effect on motivational orientation and that creativity flourishes in environments that foster intrinsic motivation. Five environmental constraints have consistently proven to be killers of creativity and intrinsic motivation: expected reward, expected evaluation, competition, surveillance and time limits (Amabile, 1998; Hennessey, 2004). It is noted that these creativity killers are well established practices in traditional classrooms where teachers manage and direct programmes, behaviour and learning. On the other hand research (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Baum, Renzulli & Hébert, 1995) has shown that intrinsic motivation and creativity can be nurtured in classroom environments that foster self-determination and where feedback and rewards are perceived as informational, useful and informative of performance quality. Eisenberger and Rhoades (2001) recently put forth evidence that promised reward enhanced creativity when the reward was clearly contingent upon creative, as opposed to conventional performance. Interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers were also linked to intrinsic motivation. Hennessey (2004) recognised that relationships that are supportive of self determination are also linked positively to intrinsic motivation.

Creatively gifted learners are described as being self motivated rather than teacher-motivated and consequently are considered to perform better with unstructured, flexible contracts with a self selected focus (Winner 1997; Hennessey, 2004; Baum et al., 1995).

Suggested programmes to support high levels of creative achievement and productivity, focus on the development of fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality. Baum et al. (1995), Maker (2005), Torrance (1977), and Treffinger (2008), describe creativity fostering environments as providing opportunities for pondering and brewing ideas, as valuing and celebrating intellectual risk taking, divergent thinking and difference within authentic contexts.

The complexity of creativity suggests that the most appropriate way to determine creativity is to immerse in opportunities for creativity and observe evidence of creative thinking processes overtime. Fraser (2006) describes this process in a

metaphorical writing project where teachers fostered creativity through open ended lessons that encourage variety and innovation while allowing time to play with ideas.

4.2. We negotiate

With a deeper understanding of creativity, creative processes and creative environments we negotiated a creative opportunity for Dexter. The negotiated conference involved Dexter, Brad and other supportive people in the school and aimed to develop an action plan for supporting the production of a video to be led and created by Dexter. The negotiation process was not straight forward. Dexter led the conversation on tangents discussing details of character, organisation and visions of grandeur while avoiding discussions of content. He seemed to revel in the power of being the centre of attention. He resisted attempts to shape ideas for the story, explaining that the story would shape as he was filming. His audience was sceptical. He had unwavering self belief. We ended the negotiation with a commitment to support his creative process and Dexter and I started a six month journey of discovery where I learnt to trust him and he learnt to humour me with organisational concessions. The movie was created and it was creative. A Cannes masterpiece, maybe not. A box office success, a resounding yes. Dexter's audience responded to the humour, was fascinated by the visual effects and was intrigued by the story. It was a movie by a child for children. School life changed for Dexter, he had produced a product and he was moving toward his own expectations.

4.3. Emerging issues

Creativity is boundary pushing and boundary crossing and it seems to me that this is a challenge for schools that function in a linear way replicating an industrial, manufacturing model for efficiency and conformity. A teacher may be creative but this doesn't necessarily translate into programmes that foster creativity, creative individuals or creative products. The structure of schools seems to negate creativity. Timetables tend to negate creativity. Curriculums tend to negate creativity. Learning intentions may negate creativity. Worksheets are likely to negate creativity. Singularity of purpose is inclined to negate creativity.

Robinson (2006) equates current educational practices to a fast food model of production with an emphasis on standardization and results that impoverish our

energies as much as fast food impoverishes our bodies. He laments that education does not feed our passions but focuses on a particular form of development that is predicated on intellectual ability at the cost of creative pursuits. He believes this is similar to strip mining our minds. Robinson quotes Picasso as saying that all children are born as artists the problem is remaining an artist as we grow up.

Craft's (2008) review of the literature on creativity positions creativity as a 'good thing' in current political, social and economic discourse. But she also identifies a number of potential limitations to fostering creativity in education. Similarly to Robinson (2006), she believes that the pragmatics of policy, curriculum organisation, centrally defined pedagogies and assessment regimes shape learning intentions that define uniform achievement, uniform products, low energy and conformity and negate creativity nurturing environments. I wonder how it would be possible to promote a creative culture within a school, the kind of creative culture that celebrates and encourages multiple creativities. When I imagine creative engagement I envisage diverse thought processes, exciting possibilities, risk taking and experimentation, just in time learning, collaborative problem solving and unique products. Robinson (2010) calls for a revolution in education with a shift away from the industrial metaphor of education toward an agricultural metaphor. Principles of agriculture focus on creating the conditions for flourishing and instead of cloning a particular system for success environments are customised to meet particular needs and personalised for the possibility of success.

Dexter's is neither a developed creativity nor a universal creativity. His is a fledgling creativity in the area of video and film. We know of this creativity because when given creative opportunity and license, he demonstrates creative possibility. When he took control of the camera and when adults were off the scene, he produced novel ways of getting his message across – he danced with his interviewees, he swung from fences as he introduced the 'have a go day', he played the tormented evil guy in a toilet booth and he filmed raindrops falling from the sky while lying in the rain – the camera took a week to dry out! With opportunity Dexter responded with originality and played with novelty, he took risks, got things wrong and learnt from those wrongs. Dexter seized the moment and shaped creatively, satisfying ideas through trial and error. Together we opened the way for creativity through opportunity,

support and open mindedness. He spread his dreams under our feet and we trod softly for fear of treading on his dreams (adapting Yeats, 1903, p.60).

4.4 We make meaning

It has come to make me like school. Everyday, I try to keep track and the days you don't come I pretty much get bored and don't want to come to school but you know the days that you do come it actually makes it fun for me even though you are not there for the whole day and it makes it you know different. (Dexter, Reflective conversation)

There were quite a few occasions, more than usual, where he will do his work properly and really apply the level of thought which you would expect from someone who is doing it rather than just racing through it. (Brad, Reflective conversation)

Shift happens! (Fisch, 2007). Fisch was talking about change in the 21st Century, but I believe this is an appropriate description for our experience during the research period because the shift happened without any obvious sense of cause and effect as if it was a natural extension of the learning process we were experiencing together. As we were working together there was not a sense of change but as we reflect back on the experience there is a sense of purposeful exploration and evidence change. Dexter felt better about school and his teacher noticed a slight improvement in his level of engagement with the classroom activities. I had developed a strong working relationship with Dexter that was built on trust and respect for difference. Five influencing dynamics for the 'feel good' factor were teased out of the feedback and evaluative conversations. These dynamics were relationship, understanding and acknowledging difference, opportunity to be different, raised expectation and understanding of sensitivities and intensities.

4.4.1. Relationship

When discussing the dynamics that had contributed to his feeling better about school, Dexter noted a positive change in the way he was perceived by other people in the school. *"honestly no adult has umm since from you, adults have really started looking to me and saying what is he doing? Is he trying to be smart or something? He must be*

smarter than I think" (Dexter, Reflective conversation). He was also aware of the dynamics at play in wider school networks. He recognised that his teacher was not in a position of power within the school and that my involvement had given Brad permission to approach Dexter's learning in a different way. *"He [Brad] is cooperating with you and he is letting me do this opportunity. There are not that much teachers in this school that would allow me to do this thing. Before he was cooperating with the other teachers and not letting me use the computer and do stuff"* (Dextor, Reflective conversation).

Brad had a strong positive relationship with Dexter before the project and this continued throughout. He noted that Dexter was willing to share things with him and he felt this helped to keep him out of trouble. Dexter also acknowledged the positive relationship with his teacher recognising him as a good teacher willing to support his different learning style. Brad also recognised the power of peer relationships and used Dexter's successes with his creative project to encourage positive connections with his peers. *"When he does overcome things or he really does achieve something, he has to celebrate his success with a little bit of exposure of other children and he can show off and feel proud about it and it is reinforced.... and it has been a really good process and he acknowledges that and celebrates with other people"* (Brad, Reflective conversation). When Dexter shared his final video at a full school assembly he stood proudly in front of the school and described his learning journey. His peers were fascinated by his achievement and asked him questions as they would a real director. "How long have you been doing this for?" "What was the most difficult moment?" "What is your next movie going to be about?" Teachers acknowledged his accomplishment and he stood taller. Together we made a difference and shift happened.

4.4.2. Understanding and acknowledging difference

Throughout the conversations we acknowledged and affirmed Dexter's differences. We shared understanding from the literature on how gifted children are typically different from other learners and how this influenced preferred learning experiences. We sought a different perspective that gave gifted learners the right to be different. Dexter noted that this understanding had made a difference for his learning. *"I finally have someone who understands me"* (Dexter, Reflective conversation).

Accommodating differences also involved acknowledging false assumptions. We were initially challenged by Dexter's apparent refusal to plan and formulate a storyline for his movie and sceptical of his ability to create as he filmed. During our initial brainstorm for the movie I was dismayed at how difficult it was to pin Dexter to an idea that we could develop. He was totally resistant to planning and at times we had to let him go with his idea and fail before he learnt to trust our adult wisdom about planning. Although there were times where left to his own devices and working in his own impulsive way, Dexter produced a more creative outcome than our planned ones. Even the most planned scene seemed to take on a life of its own as the director called "scene one, take three, action!"

We had also made a false assumption about Dexter's knowledge of processes involved in movie making based on his extensive knowledge of the entertainment world. We soon realised that *"He was a little different in terms of a finished product and we thought he could just jump to it. He had to have the process deconstructed for him until he realised what went into a film"* (Brad, Reflective conversation).

4.4.3. Opportunity to learn differently

Both Dexter and Brad recognised the positive effects of having an opportunity to learn differently. *"Thing that really motivated Dexter was making films and breaking it down for him."* Brad felt that a strength of the project was that it gave Dexter a *"little bit of time and allowed him to move away from the main stream."* To continue with the positive effects of the project Brad would have *"give[n] Dexter more emphasis on his own learning and then maybe discussing with him as to how he can get things done in the classroom"* (Brad, Reflective conversation). In this way Brad also recognised that acknowledging and accommodating to his differences, was more effective than trying to shape him to conform to a regular classroom programme.

Both Brad and Dexter recognised the power of partnership. Dexter acknowledged that partnership gave him permission to learn in a different way and to follow his own learning pathway. Brad recognised partnership as allowing Dexter to have more emphasis on his own learning and to involve others in the process. He described a shift in teaching focus away from teaching knowledge to discussing how to get things done by teaching processes.

4.4.4. Raised expectations

Dexter's expectations of himself seemed to lift during the course of the research project and he adjusted his behaviour to accommodate more closely to classroom expectations. Brad noted that he was taking more responsibility for his behaviour. *"I think he has controlled himself a lot more in social situations in the classroom and in classroom discussions. Not so silly as he has been. Taking more responsibility for himself"* (Brad, Reflective conversation). In the playground Dexter felt that he was still in the same amount of trouble as always. *"I try to keep out of trouble I always do but trouble always finds me"* (Dexter, Reflective conversation). But he was aware of how other teachers seemed to view him differently as mentioned above.

4.4.5. Acknowledging intensities and sensitivities

Dexter's intensity was evident in his passion for movies. He had a strong desire to make a movie at school. *"Well I always wanted to make a movie in class. When I was in room 16 I kept on shouting I am making a movie in the playground, actors need to come join me and I had imagination but you actually made me finally get to that point. It's not that I couldn't have done it myself but I needed a camera and stuff and an adult"* (Dexter, Reflective conversation). Brad recognised the power of his intensities for motivation and identified this as a strategy he would use again with other students. *"I would find the motivating factor and help them to break down the process and support them to do it"* (Brad, Reflective conversation). Brad was also very aware of Dexter's sensitivity to the opinions of people around him to the point of being unwilling to acknowledge what he did not know in case others thought he was not intelligent. Brad recognised how this sensitivity and self consciousness impacted on his readiness to take learning risks. *"He is a little bit too self conscious about people thinking that he might not know something and he might not be as smart as they thinks he is"* (Brad, Reflective conversation). Brad still describes these characteristics as an over sensitivity implying remediation, rather than an integral part of Dexter's giftedness needing support. He believes that Dexter needs to develop resilience when coping with other people's attitudes and he sees the development of these skills as the next step for Dexter's learning.

Brad felt that the process that we had been through had been helpful in building Dexter's *"confidence to acknowledge the areas where he is not too certain about*

things” (Brad, Reflective conversation). With this personal confidence Dexter was more willing to engage with new learning experiences in the classroom and take risks with his learning as identified by Brad in the introduction to this section of the research report.

4.5. I reflect: On change and sustainability

How much have Dexter, Brad and I changed as a result of our learning together? Did the change involve growth or did the change involve a fundamental shift in how we understand, teach and support hidden gifted learners? Are the changes sustainable or are the changes situation dependent?

Changes that involve fundamental shifts in understanding are transformative. Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1995) occurs when lived experience becomes part of the learner’s reality and causes a paradigmatic shift leading to a different way of behaving and thinking. This fundamental shift emerges from intense critical reflection that challenges previously held beliefs and assumptions (Servage, 2008). Cranton (2002) describes transformative change as a challenge to underlying assumptions, beliefs and habits of mind leading to a different way of knowing and acting. She describes the process as dramatic or incremental, insightful, intuitive, emotional and rational. Servage links transformative learning and sustainable and substantive change. Explicit to transformative learning is that change emerges from dialectic engagement with diverse perspectives and therefore a social context for learning is inherent (Mezirow, 1995; Cranton, 2002; Servage, 2008; Brookfield, 1995). Mezirow (1978, 2000) identified ten phases for transformative learning. These phases are initiated by a disorientating dilemma and thinking moves through a series of reflective phases that include critical examination of personal assumptions and exploration of alternative perspectives, this is followed by phases for reconstruction and reintegration. Within our research the initial conversations and the negotiated learning pathway could be conceived as the disorientating dilemma and the reflective and evaluative conversations have elements of the reflective phases in transformative learning.

During our final reflective conversations I sought evidence of transformative change and sustainability. I anticipated that the negotiated learning pathways may have

triggered a challenge to underlying beliefs and values and that transformative change would be evident in our reflections and discussion of actions as different ways of viewing learning and teaching. I was looking for transformative changes in learning from disinterested, passive and undermining to motivated, active and affirming; and changes in teaching from controlling, shaping and disconnected to empowering, affirming and connected. I gauged the degree of transformation by how the changes were articulated in the reflective and evaluative conversations. Using discussions of Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Servage, 2008; Brookfield, 1995; Cranton, 2002 and Kitchenham, 2008) and acknowledging that transformative learning is not a linear process but may be spiral-like (Cranton, 2002), I devised a four phase rubric for transformation for teachers and students (appendices 10 and 11). The initial column of the rubric identifies conversation that is 'descriptive' and self focused. The next column describes conversation that is 'informative' and identifies underlying beliefs, values and habits of minds linked to the described actions and thoughts. The 'dialogical' column describes conversation that outlines perceived challenges to current thinking by questioning and considering other perspectives and new insights. The final 'transformative' column of the framework describes conversation that discusses the fundamental shifts in thinking and accompanying changes in learning and teaching behaviours. The analysis of reflective conversations for transformation went beyond describing changes to evaluating the degree of change and enabled possible predictions about sustainability.

For both Dexter and Brad changes were starting to happen but these changes were only fledgling changes. They clearly described differences for learning and teaching and they were beginning to identify the underlying challenges that these changes present to their practices as learner and teacher. Brad was beginning to acknowledge that Dexter, as a hidden gifted learner, had different social and emotional characteristics and different learning needs and he was beginning to articulate that this may require a different way of teaching needing a greater input of his time to support the learning processes. This challenged his underlying belief that students who were less able and motivated were more deserving of his teaching time than students who were achieving within the average and above average range who were unmotivated. Brad explains his thinking and describes Dexter as a "*capable reader and mathematically able.*" He continues with '*and there are other children who are not so*

capable but who really want to learn and I struggle with the allocation of time to work with that” (Brad, Reflective conversation). To support his continuing professional learning in this area Brad needs to seek dialogical understanding for differentiation of classroom programmes to meet diverse learning needs. He needs a deeper understanding of motivation for learning and his role in getting students motivated for learning (Absolum, 2007). Without this further exploration the opportunity to shift his thinking about differentiated learning pathways and toward transformative change in his practice is lost.

Dexter articulated a stronger change towards transformation when he identified a different perception of how other teachers were more aware of him as a capable learner. This change of perception may have contributed to the changes identified by Brad where Dexter’s learning behaviour became more self controlled and responsible, and where he was able to monitor his silly behaviour and engage more deeply in set learning tasks. The learning conversations and negotiated learning pathway seem to have helped Dexter to find confirmation for his belief of himself as an intelligent person, initially through his teacher and me, and then from the wider community. His changes were founded in dialogical processes and in line with transformative learning theory resulting changes are more likely to be substantive and sustainable (Servage, 2008).

Brad identified some significant barriers to change. As a beginning teacher he recognised that he was on a steep learning curve translating his learning about teaching into practice. He described it as an ‘enormous step up.’ He was overwhelmed by the demands of the curriculum, the needs of thirty learners, the perceived impossibility of meeting individualised learning needs, the need for routine, the need to ensure fairness and consistency and the challenge of managing behaviour. Central to transformative learning is having the head space to critically explore foundational perspectives (own and others), freedom to experiment with practice and opportunity to share with others to collectively imagine other possibilities. Problem Based Methodology initiated critical exploration of our beliefs and values and the negotiated learning pathway explored an alternative possibility but these processes happened within the context of a school wide setting of school improvement focused on data driven decision making and student learning focused on meeting curriculum

objectives. Servage (2008) fears that when the concentration of collaborative work is on collaborative planning, collaborative development of assessment tools and collaborative assessment of student achievement data, then the time and energy needed for the level of critical reflection required for growth, transformative learning and change is limited and our concentration on accountability and instrumental change remains unchallenged.

4.6. Emerging understanding: On complexity and change

As I listen to the transcripts, reflect on the insights, struggle with understanding, seek other points of view in the literature and through colleagues, and write my emerging understandings, I shape a consciousness of how I practice as an RTLB. I am becoming increasingly aware of the strategic position of RTLB at the interface between researcher and practitioner. The theory and research findings filter down and at the same time the data and sense making percolate upward. Our story which seemed like chaos when immersed in the journey now has an emerging shape and it is complex.

I sense a shift in my foundational position as a constructivist toward thinking from complexity science. This seems to be a natural progression for me as I read Kuhn's (2009) critique of complexity science and education. She describes complexity as catalytic in enabling research processes that encourage critical and reflective discourse about the nature of education and conceptual frameworks, as well as about impacts and legacies of utilising a particular framework. Kuhn also believes that complexity approaches encourage reflective processes that cultivate a greater awareness of epistemic resources and their interconnectivity.

Schools and classrooms are complex and dynamic systems. Learning and engagement are complex and dynamic problems. Complex problems, within complex systems are multi-dimensional, non-linear, interconnected and unpredictable requiring different ways for finding solutions. Wheatley (2008) believes that to learn about complex systems we need to dance with uncertainty and be just in time learners responsive to situations and outcomes, taking risks, making mistakes, learning from experience and applying that learning to the next task. Complexity calls for continuous learning, dynamic problem solving and habits of thought that are not bound to linearity or

certainty (Kuhn, 2009). Kuhn describes a complexity perspective as being sensitive to the recursive way in which organising processes influence the products, actions and effects and in turn are influenced by the products, actions and effects while also being influenced by many sets of rules. A complexity perspective is described as emphasising human evolution as radically unpredictable, human beings as essentially self referential and reflexive and human enterprise as responsive and participative.

Kuhn (2009) suggests that change within a complex system is often catalytic and comes about simply through offering different descriptions of the complexity. Unwittingly this research has sought to do precisely this – to facilitate change through enlarged understanding of the underlying dynamics of the learner/teacher situation. The individual focus of the learner –teacher situation is described within complexity science as reflective of the complex whole with the whole being present in each of the parts. That is society as a whole is present in each individual in language, knowledge, obligations and standards. (Morrin, 2001 in Kuhn, 2009) As RTLBI have the role of mapping and analysing these complex systems and working to facilitate change within these systems by presenting an enlarged view of the complex system through connection to research and theory and exploration of diverse perspectives. I feel I am the choreographer for the dance of uncertainty. Change (planned and unplanned) then unfolds in non-linear ways, and arises out of our interaction with each other and through voices from the literature.

Chaos and order are part of change. Our research at times seemed chaotic and at other times there was a sense of direction and purpose. The chaos was in the detail and the direction came from the emerging patterns. Theories of self organising systems from the new sciences help me to understand the possibility of patterns emerging from chaos through collective understandings and knowledge, not from any preconceived notions of how things should be (Mayo, 2003; Kuhn, 2009, Fullan, 2007).

Chaos theorists have developed tools for understanding complexity and some of these tools parallel the tools that underpin our research. Learning conversations are similar to coherent conversations (Kuhn, 2009; Woog & Knox, 2006). Coherent conversations are group conversations that do not have an agenda and are open to emerging directions with the possibility of revealing how people think. These

conversations are intuitive and reflexive of conversational processes. They enable a deconstructive process to examine underlying values, beliefs, experiences; actions and consequences, our theories of action. Our case studies are similar to fractal analysis (Kuhn, 2009). Within the space of complexity theory the analysis of the narratives of individuals provides a glimpse of the macrocosm. Capacity for self organisation and emergence in one fractal represents the dynamics and capacity for emergence of the system as a whole. Our strategic conversations correspond to attractor analysis (Kuhn, 2009) and aim to identify values, issues of concern and motivators that guide and shape attitudes and behaviours. Identifying the attractor sets or theories of action assists in building understanding of the complexity extending beyond the individuals involved in the conversation. Alongside this understanding is a deeper understanding and appreciation for difference. These emerging understandings open possibilities for change. In our research these changes are encapsulated in negotiated learning pathways which are similar to Kuhn's emerging neophyte shapes.

Within complexity studies there are also developing metaphors for the processes identified. One such metaphor is a liberating structure (Lipmanowicz, McCandless & Joslyn, 2007). A liberating structure is an insightful, underpinning framework that helps to distil the chaos. A liberating structure is sufficiently unstructured so as to enable emerging understanding from chaos without imposing on and defining that understanding. A liberating structure enables collective voice. Our liberating structures were our conversations, our frameworks for analysis and our negotiated learning pathways.

Another metaphor within complexity science is the butterfly effect or dramatic disproportionate sensitivity to initial conditions (Kuhn, 2009). Using this metaphor our initial exploration with video making may have a disproportionate influence on how Dexter navigates his future and may contribute to a career in film to parallel Peter Jackson. Only time will tell. Dexter's current story is promising as I continue to work with him at intermediate school. A recent classroom observation records:

Focused, attentive, organised. Sitting toward the front, engaged with those sitting beside him. He shares in the class conversation and contributes meaningfully. He is listened to and affirmed by his peers. For now the grey boy

has flashes of colour and he is comfortable in his space. He still writes with random capital letters and without full stops, his mathematical problem solving is strangely lateral but he is engaged and hungry for the learning school has to offer (RTL B Observation, March 2010).

Chapter Five

Ricky: Adventurer extraordinaire

I scanned the room looking for the familiar figure. When this failed I zoned in on the energy spots, groups of children returning from break, gently pushing, reluctant to release the freedom of the outdoors. They searched for drink bottles, to water parched bodies. I still failed to find my target. It was the noise that caught my attention next. A continuous stream of words, the speaker refusing to draw breath in-case he lost his train of thought or in-case someone else would speak and take away the control he had. He argued, complaining about fairness, about the interpretation of the rule, voicing his belief that they were wrong and everyone was against him. No one challenged, others just brushed past and the words subsided into deep and meaningful sighs of discontent. He found a seat at the back of the group slowly forming on the mat in front of the white board. When the teacher entered, Ricky jostled for attention with witty comments and the occasional derogatory remark but mostly his words were lost to the backs of the heads in front of him. A piece of paper caught his attention and he quietly withdrew into his own world. An instruction, a movement pulled him back to the world of the classroom and he joined general flow to his desk, rummaging for an exercise book, unfound. His pencil, a pencil sharpener, an excuse to move. Across the room. First stop, touching a pencil case - the owner retrieved it quickly. Second stop, a comment about a book on a desk – ignored. Third stop, a quick nudge and an attempt to foot trip – a stronger nudge back. He laughed and busied himself with the sharpener. Everyone settled to work and he remained busy but unproductive, scanning the room, watching for just the right moment to return to his desk, the moment that was just long enough for him to remain unnoticed. Pencil poised he doodled in the corner of the page. A few words and a longing glance out the window. He caught the teacher's eye and smiled, returning to his page (Field notes, Feb 2009)

Vital statistics (Aug 2008):

Name:	Ricky
Rank:	Yr 5
Age:	9yrs
Reading:	Probe 10.5 to 11.5yrs
Writing:	Reluctant
Maths:	Copes at L3
Passion:	Computer games, rapidly reads instructions and applies understandings to decode the intricacies of games Thinks strategically when playing
Genre:	Action
Ambition:	Don't know
Excitabilities:	High energy, intuitive, sensitive, intense, insightful

Quote: I like learning. School is a place to learn. Teachers know stuff

5.1. Insights from a learning conversation

5.1.1 We hear

Ricky's poem of discovery voiced his love for life. He loves people. He loves fun. He loves to learn. He loves doing things. He thrives on novelty and gets bored with repetition, long explanations and waiting. He described how he fiddles, talks, thinks up stories, wonders about insects, dinosaurs, the beginning of the world and reads two books at the same time to cope with a slow pace. Ricky is aware of how these actions to stimulate, also contributed to being in trouble, often. He also described how his behaviour created problems for his peers as can be seen from the poem of discovery created by me using phrases from our learning conversations.

*Basically other people don't get along with me in the class
They find me annoying
Call me names and say that I'm a blacker and use bad words
I am annoying
If I was them I would be annoyed too
Not getting on with my work
Bugging them
Get a bit excited about what we are doing
I get a bit off track
talk to people
(Ricky, Poem of Discovery)*

Ricky's teacher, Stuart, described Ricky as being an emotional rollercoaster. He identified Ricky as off track often, and he attributed this to not immediately understanding concepts. He also described Ricky as having difficulty with making friends and believed Ricky needed to have friends. He saw his failure to work well with others as impacting on his work and learning.

Ricky reflected on the routine and repetition of his school day. In a monotone voice he listed standing in line, sitting on the mat, waiting for the teacher, waiting for others, sitting, doing, going..... He contrasted this with the good parts of his day when he felt challenged and engaged. "*I like learning. School is a place to learn. Teachers know stuff*" (Ricky, Learning conversation). He described the positive

feelings he got when he was able to figure things out, when he got to do real things like learning how to follow instructions to make a sandwich and when he got to use his creative mind and make up his own stories. Ricky described the class economy in detail, clearly articulating the principles that underlay the learning. He explained how they earned money through their behaviour and then how they used the money to pay mortgage on their desk space and rent for their chair and tote tray. He explained that he chose not to have a tote tray and that he had just paid his mortgage and realised that he now had to start saving again. He understood how this learning was preparing him for life. Ricky also described the negativity of copying unnecessarily, sitting still for long periods of time and waiting for his turn to use the computer when others took up computer time and didn't know what they were doing.

Ricky had an acute sense of fairness and it was black and white. He revealed this when he talked about the unfairness of children missing their turn on the computer if they had already completed their publishing while others who were behind got to use the computers to catch up. He had been very offended when he had thought about purchasing a cheese cake voucher with his class dollars and had mentioned that he would buy Stuart a chocolate cheesecake which he expected Stuart to share with him. But Stuart had replied in jest that he'd be lucky to get the crumbs. Ricky felt rejected and misunderstood the intention for humour. Playgrounds become battle grounds for this literal interpretation of fairness and team sports are traumatic especially if unsupervised. My initial observation of Ricky described his argumentative return from break as he attempted to convince a group of children about the application of the rules. Stuart described Ricky as not sporty but Ricky protested and told us about weekends of sporting activities with his grandfather. Stuart reviewed his comment to identify relationships as the challenge when engaged in sport.

Stuart was challenged by Ricky and his lack of work output. His written work did not demonstrate the level of thinking that he articulated in discussions. He had explored a range of options to support his work including peer support, teacher aide support, reduced work requirements, computer use and highly structured work. Stuart viewed his actions as only partially effective and identified that Ricky didn't complete work without one to one support and threats. He believed that Ricky needed managing and shaping and that this was difficult in a class of thirty three children.

5.1.2. I connect: On excitability

Excitability, along with intensity and heightened sensitivity in gifted children can be part of the essence of their giftedness. Piechowski (2006) views excitability as the capacity to bring enormous amounts of energy to a task, be it physical or cognitive and defines this as psycho-motor excitability. Psycho-motor excitability presents itself as surplus energy, zealous enthusiasm and an incessant need for action. Dabrowski with Piechowski (1977) suggested that overexcitability along with special abilities and autonomous factors such as willpower, self-determination and autonomy were necessary for the development of potential.

Silverman (2007) described these children as never stopping, as talking compulsively, acting impulsively, discovering and making learning connections at the speed of light and as testing the patience of those around them. They blurt answers, have difficulty waiting for turns, are constantly in motion and fail to give close attention to detail. They are a teacher's emotional rollercoaster!

Lovecky (1999) and Kaufmann (2000) described these gifted learners as having characteristics of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and found that they have a greater degree of asynchrony in cognitive, social and emotional development. Lovecky also found that these learners had more specialised interests and pursued more complexity in their activities than age peers. She recognised apparent deficits in social behaviour such as misreading social cues, having poor timing and a lack of empathy for group goals and group dynamics. Compared to other gifted learners, Lovecky identified cognitive deficits in their ability to think sequentially, to use working memory adequately, to solve problems using part whole relationships and to reason inductively as they had trouble identifying key features in information. Consequently she observed less work completed, rushed assignments, frequent changes of topic in project work and excessive time required to complete simple exercises. She noted that these learners do not experience the intrinsic reward of completing an activity that other gifted learners experience. In a positive vein she also noted that when working on a self chosen activity these learners were able to immerse themselves in tasks and work for extended periods without much external reinforcement.

5.1.3. We ponder

Understanding Ricky's high energy behaviour as part of his 'hard wiring' for viewing the world in a multisided manner (Piechowski 2006) helped us to move our thinking away from programmes designed to contain and manage his energy to programming in a way that encompassed his energy. Building on Lovecky's observation that high energy gifted learners were better able to immerse themselves in a self chosen activity we explored the possibility of negotiating a learning pathway with Ricky.

5.2. We negotiate

As we negotiated we kept in mind key shapers from Ricky's theory of action to guide our decision making and planning. These were that Ricky had a high need for stimulation, that he responded to novelty and he had lots of energy. I explained that these characteristics were who Ricky was and we didn't want to change that. We also highlighted that Ricky was sensitive and emotionally reactive and that this impacted on his friendships. We suggested that art may be a motivator for his work. As we included aspects of Stuart's Theory of Action we considered Stuart's concern for building positive habits that would help him in high school. We also acknowledged Stuart's need for structure and Stuart conceded that he could cope with Ricky learning in a different way as long as he could see how it was helping him to learn and it didn't distract other learners.

We recalled from our learning conversation how Ricky had articulated how he liked to learn using contract sheets.

"Get those reading activity sheet thingys. Like what we were all doing so we wouldn't have to sit on the mat. We would just do that thing because all the information would be on the sheet" (Ricky, Learning conversation). *"If we could get a contract like at the beginning of the day that explained everything that we had to do"* (Ricky, Strategic conversation). He saw a contract sheet as a possibility for breaking the monotony of sitting on that mat, doing work, sitting on the mat, doing work. He also suggested that having better access to a computer would help him to access information better and get more work done.

We explored ideas within the class theme of Junk to Funk as this would help Stuart to manage the process and we suggested options for Ricky to explore independently –

recycling, mask making, play production. Ricky listened without response. As Stuart described the ideas for the play production Ricky floated the idea that the play was like Age of Empires. I cautiously suggested that he might like to do some learning related to the Age of Empires. He started to actively participate in our negotiations and tried to justify using a game in his learning. *“It’s like a game of knowledge where you can learn how to march and drag round the people and make them fight”* (Ricky, Strategic conversation). Stuart responded to his interest and explained the strategic thinking needed to successfully navigate the game. He felt it was an educational game from the strategic point of view. We discussed the different ages that Ricky could explore within the game and we wondered about the possibility of exploring how closely the game reflected the history of the time and suggested that he might like to compare and contrast the game with the reality. He also considered how Ricky could make a difference by writing a letter to the Board of Trustees to convince them of the educational merits of playing Age of Empires at school and asking them to purchase a copy of the game for the library. Having identified a focus we continued the conversation by brainstorming organisational possibilities and resourcing. Ricky contributed actively to the conversation.

5.3. Emerging understanding: On authority

A challenge within participatory action research is to rest knowledge in and with the people who will be using it. As I listened to and reflected on our strategic conversations I monitored the power dynamics within our negotiations. There was the danger of a hierarchy of power influencing the process, Researcher-RTLB-Teacher-Learner, but this didn’t seem to happen. I suspect that the learning conversations had softened the natural power dynamics so that everyone had a sense of ownership in the process opening the way for collaboration and negotiated decision making.

Examining the strategic conversations for evidence of collaboration and negotiated decision making I noticed that the balance of power shifted throughout the negotiation process as the focus of discussion moved within our personal knowledge frameworks. Initially the power in our negotiations was with me as I laid out the groundwork for our collective consideration building on insights gained from the learning conversations and the action theories. As the negotiations proceeded ownership shifted to Ricky and Stuart and we discussed possibilities connected to the classroom

programme. After we identified that the learning focus would be ‘Age of Empires,’ Ricky became the main contributor of information about the game and Stuart took ownership of organisational considerations. Together we connected possibilities for learning in the curriculum. When we were talking about the research I had the authority, when we were talking about the classroom Stuart had the authority and when we were talking about the Age of Empires Ricky had the authority.

Robinson and Lai (2006) refer to the Ladder of Inference (Argyris, 1978) to describe this process of collaboration to improve practice. The Ladder of Inference is a metaphor for understanding the process of untangling misperceptions that may be confusing people’s understandings of a situation when they are attempting to solve a problem. An inquiry process is used to help people climb down their ladders of inference to find points of confusion and to climb up to collaboratively problem solve and build actions. When we were sharing in our learning conversations we were climbing down our ladders of inference and were building our collective understandings. When we were negotiating our next steps we were climbing up the ladder together. Our learning conversations revealed our misperceptions and assumptions and enabled us to adjust according to our insights and saved us from pushing our own agendas across a chasm of misunderstanding. Climbing up the ladder to negotiate a possible way forward seemed effortless because we were on the same rung.

5.4. I planned: An inquiry

I planned a learning pathway using a problem based inquiry approach. The problem was to use the game Age of Empires to investigate why civilizations succeed or fail. This was loosely tied to the classroom focus of Junk to Funk through a creative art activity. Ricky and Stuart had experienced an inquiry process through the school’s learning pathways programme. This inquiry process was informed by the work of Jamie McKenzie and I assessed Stuart’s understanding and passion for inquiry to be at an experimental stage whereby he was empathetic to the thinking behind inquiry but tentative with the practice. Ricky’s negotiated learning pathway integrated curriculum through Problem Based Inquiry. Problem Based Inquiry comes from the work of David Perkins, Robert Swartz and Yoram Harpaz from the National Centre

for Teaching Thinking in the United States. A Problem Based Inquiry presents the learner with an emotionally charged and provocative scenario that undermines fixed beliefs and assumptions. Embedded in the scenario is an authentic problem connected to the student's life and specifying a skilful thinking process. This negotiated learning pathway was significantly different from the rest of Stuart's teacher controlled, curriculum directed programme. Also, Ricky's current level of self discipline within the classroom was currently weak; he struggled to remain focused on set activities and he did not transition well between activities. The negotiated learning pathway was also challenging, requiring multi-structural thinking, relational thinking and independent learning skills. We were moving Ricky from one end of the learning spectrum to the other. I committed to supporting the learning process and helping Ricky to develop the necessary thinking skills with a combination of graphic organisers, regular email contact and one to one teaching support two to three times a week. Stuart was to monitor progress and feedback developments to me. He would provide support as he was able, depending on his wider classroom commitments school leadership role.

5.4.1. We learn

As we expected, Ricky embraced the learning pathway enthusiastically, engaging in the game, learning the strategies of play and researching aspects of the history behind the game. Stuart kept an eye on progress and managed the dynamics of Ricky having his own laptop and individualised learning pathway. *'Overall, he was occupied and engaged. Quality... would have to keep a closer eye to see how that is going. The other students seemed to leave him to it. A couple were over his shoulder a few times but nothing disruptive to my class programme or to him'* (Stuart, Feedback email). Throughout the process Stuart was aware of the challenges for a teacher managing an individualised programme. He was acutely aware that individualisation for students did not mean hands off for teacher and his greatest concern was monitoring Ricky's use of the game and keeping track of his learning. *"Quite difficult for me because not always knowing what he is doing all the time he goes off to do something and it is like he's not concentrating and you can tell when he's not working and he is playing on the game and you ask has he got something to do and he has to go back to do that then he'll go off and play the game so my biggest issue is that he gets side tracked really easily and goes off and prefers to do the fun stuff rather than his CCC"* (Stuart,

Feedback conversation). Ricky's concern was finding and using information on the internet. *"I can find stuff on the internet and I can find lots of interesting stuff..... Hard finding information. Using the book in the library was helpful.I am not that good with information I am not that good with skimming and scanning and I have to learn a little bit more and it is hard. When I don't really know, it's not fun"* (Ricky, Feedback conversation). My concern was maintaining the engagement and responding to the fluctuations in levels of motivation. After about three weeks Ricky had stretched the limits of the demo version of Age of Empires and he wanted more challenge. He had lost interest in the learning of inquiry contract which concerned me because we were at the analysis phase of the inquiry and I felt that the more complex thinking involved would help Ricky to better appreciate the learning. I worked hard to support his thinking and to re-engage him with provocative discussion, video resources and current events. But the harder I worked the more resistant he became. Eventually I realised that he really did not want to make predictions about the future of our civilisation. He wanted the challenge and fun of the game environment.

In my enthusiasm for the potential learning opportunities of the game I had allowed my teacher perspective to override the perspective of the learner. I had positioned knowledge of history and thinking about the future over and above strategic thinking, knowledge of gaming, planning, problem solving and data handling. As I reflected critically alongside Ricky and listened to his voice I finally heard that gaming was his world; history and the future was mine. When I was nine years old my world was not history and the future, it was dolls and fantasy games. In that realisation I was able to let go of the prediction activity and I we renegotiated a new learning direction connected to gaming. As educator I had fallen victim to my own middle class, white, fifty year old values and beliefs and these had overridden my goals for collaboration and partnership! I had lost sight of the simplicity of our initial negotiation where we had decided to compare and contrast the game with reality and make judgements about its merits as an educational tool - simple and authentic goals connected to the life of the learner. With the best intentions in the world, I had trampled on our engaged curriculum and in my position of researcher, RTLB, 'gifted expert' my thinking had gone unchallenged until Ricky disengaged and refused to cooperate. I was challenged to revisit my driving belief that gifted learners responded to all opportunities for complex thinking and that this opportunity was denied to them

within many classroom programmes. Ricky's resistance forced me to reconsider his needs, his perspective, his abilities as well as his learning evident in the context of Age of Empires. With input from the literature on the educational value of gaming (Kirriemuir and McFarlane, 2006). I understood that the game provided him with a fast paced, exploratory and interactive environment where he was presented with multiple forms of information in parallel and the experience was fun. The game met his psycho-motor needs as an excitable gifted learner and it provided a rich context for reading comprehension, visual language, and problem solving. Suddenly my graphic organisers paled in significance and I was able to shift tack and reform the learning space to meet Ricky's learning needs with the introduction of 'Game Maker'. My thinking was transformed and Ricky was the catalyst for change.

5.5. We make meaning

[It has been] hard from the point of view of trying to run a separate something in the classroom. Although you have been good in that you have run it. But just being Ricky and getting the other children to accept that Ricky is doing something different. It has been quite good from Ricky's point of view and from my point of view cause it has helped him to make relationships in the classroom (Stuart, Evaluative conversation).

Doing a lot better. I'm getting lots of stuff done. I don't really know. The changes have been that I have been doing something different to other people in class and they are not really making a fuss about it. Sometimes it was good in the class when I was joining in. They were a little interested in what I was learning. David helped out with the game a little. Stuart is a lot less grumpier because I am being a lot more quieter with work than usual (Ricky, Evaluative Conversation).

As with Dexter, shift happened. For Ricky change related to the way he channelled and managed his energies through a learning context that captured his attention. For Stuart there were changes related to understanding excitabilities, acknowledging difference in how some children approach learning, and insight into how he could manage opportunities to be different in the future. Again I apply the organisational patterns identified in Dexter's story to analyse the described outcomes of the research – relationship, opportunity to learn differently, raised expectations and understanding of the social and emotional characteristics of giftedness.

5.5.1. Relationship

Ricky had the perception that he was more engaged and that this had had an impact on how others responded to him. He recognised that other children in the class were interested in what he was doing and related to him in a positive way which was different from before the research project. He also perceived that Stuart was less grumpy with him because he was more engaged.

Stuart also felt that there had been a strong social impact for Ricky and connected this to the individualised learning pathway and in particular his use of Age of Empires. *“One thing it has helped is his social standing in the class”* (Stuart, Reflective conversation). He felt that Ricky’s computer work and his own affirmation of that work had *“validated his role in the classroom”* (Stuart, Reflective conversation). Stuart described times when Ricky and his peers were positively engaged together in sharing understandings of the game and how he had encouraged the relationships by not interfering and insisting on class work. *“So when I am seeing positive Ricky relationships with somebody then I just let it go. It’s actually better to see him talk and share and show someone something so that others see him in a more positive light. That’s more important”* (Stuart, Reflective conversation).

Peer feedback during a ‘circle of friends’ conference coordinated by a colleague, also confirmed that they saw Ricky as a better friend. They described him as on task and in trouble with teachers less often. In this way they seemed more inclined to accept him as someone they wanted to be friends with. The teacher-learner relationship had had unintended ramifications across the learning community with the quality and nature of Ricky’s friendships being a reflection of how teachers responded to his excitable behaviour. By adopting practices to engage Ricky we had affirmed his needs for fun and freedom, but at the same time we enhanced Ricky’s need for relationship by reframing him as a positive learner in the classroom.

5.5.2. Opportunity to learn differently

Stuart acknowledged that by letting Ricky learn in this different way he had observed more complexity in his thinking. He had been surprised by the sophisticated understanding he had of the game and how he had linked his game playing to understandings of leadership and alliances. *“Surprised me about the level of*

sophistication he had in understanding the game and how he had made links to move into different levels of complexity within the game. It was like reading a sophisticated text” (Stuart, Reflective conversation). He felt that Ricky had actually learnt something and at times was more independent in his learning, although he considered that Ricky still struggled with consistent on task behaviour and that he was easily side tracked in his learning as he sought the fun factor.

Stuart described a main outcome for him was understanding Ricky’s different learning needs and having the support and modelling to develop an alternative approach to meeting those needs. *“I could have come along to a course and listened to- this is what can be done or this is what we do but it wouldn’t really have meant much you know really. I would go away and think oh that’s interesting I must think about that and oh yes but actually you need to see it in practice and you need to see it actually happen to really deal with putting in action”* (Stuart, Reflective conversation).

Ricky also recognised the positive effects of learning in an independent way, although he also acknowledged the difficult times when the learning was boring but felt he had still learnt something. *“All really good... Even the tough times when I thought it was really boring because it was learning. Feel good about finishing them [the learning tasks]”* (Ricky, Reflective conversation). Ricky felt that by using the computer and working within the context of a game he was getting more completed.

5.5.3. Raised expectation

By adopting practices to engage Ricky we also enhanced the way he felt about himself as a learner. He had his own learning programme, he had been involved in the decision making processes for his learning, he was achieving the learning goals we had negotiated and he was developing positive relationships with his peers through his learning. Ricky felt better about himself. Because *“we were doing something that I really liked to do”* (Ricky, Reflective conversation).

Stuart was ambivalent about whether the game was a context for Ricky’s learning or whether the game was the focus of Ricky’s learning. He described Ricky as often being distracted by the game and not involved in the work. Stuart managed this by

making the game conditional on completion of the graphic organisers. *“He just goes on and plays games and stuff and that has been frustrating because I can’t keep on at him enough to make sure he is doing what I think he should be doing”* (Stuart, Reflective conversation). Stuart also had reservations as to whether Ricky had the ability to manage his impulsivity. He described it as Ricky being Ricky. He acknowledged that regardless of the context Ricky would always need to be continually reminded to stay focused and on task. *“...Ricky can’t do that [stay focused]. If he was doing my work he’d go off task. So from that point of view it doesn’t really matter either we are moving along this line or we are moving along this line, whatever we were moving along he would be deviating off anyway”* (Stuart, Reflective conversation).

5.5.4. Understanding of giftedness and excitability

Stuart recognised that there had been changes in his thinking about how he could accommodate Ricky’s excitability in the classroom. *“I have loosened up and allowed him more because I’m trying [to] realise that he does learn in different ways so that when he is doing something different if it is educational in some way, like he is actually making something, then I think let’s run with that because he is actually really into that and he is learning something from it. He is just doing it differently from how I would want it done. So I have let go from that point of view”* (Stuart, Reflective conversation). Stuart felt that he had gained a deeper understanding of giftedness but still felt inexperienced in how he would manage a gifted child in the future.

5.6. I reflect: On change and sustainability

Using the ‘rubric for transformation’ as outlined in the previous case study, I analysed the changes that were described in the reflective conversations and found some evidence of thinking that is indicative of transformative change in that Ricky and Stuart were considering other perspectives to evaluate their learning and teaching practices.

Ricky recognised that his different learning behaviour had had an influence on how Stuart responded to him. *‘Stuart is a lot less grumpier because I am being a lot more quieter with work than usual’* (Ricky, Reflective conversation). He also recognised

that the rest of the class had accepted his learning in a different way without *'making a fuss.'* He believed that he had completed more work than usual but did not describe why. He identified differences but did not think further, to critically examine the implications for future learning behaviour and I didn't ask the question.

Stuart described several times, how having a different way of teaching and learning modelled for him had enabled him to see possibilities for supporting future gifted learners. *"Ok it is not rocket science what you have done is it? But the opportunity to see it in action and stuff, has been really good. So from a professional development point of view ...it has given me another thing that I can hang stuff onto so that if I have another child I've got some knowledge and I can think about that and I can think of another way that I can work with that child"* (Stuart, Reflective conversation). He differentiated the process from the usual professional development he was use to where he had been exposed to theory without the practice and he identified that his response to theory was often non existent. *"You can have all the theory in the world but when you see it in practice with a child you can start to see how you can start hanging things off it and you can start developing something"* (Stuart, Reflective conversation). But there is still a sense that exposure to another perspective has led him to adopt another possibility rather than provoke critical reflection on his current practice. Stuart has added another tool to his tool box to be brought out and dusted off as the occasion arises. This may be professional growth but is not transformative change.

Stuart described a changed understanding of the social and emotional characteristics of hidden gifted learners and he outlined how he had adjusted his teaching to accommodate more choice for Ricky. He described moments where he had surrendered his expectation to conform and had allowed Ricky to explore in his own way with his learning. *"I have loosened up and allowed him more [leeway] because I'm trying, I do try and realise that he does learn in different ways so that when he is doing something different if it is educational in some way like he is actually making something then I think let's run with that because he is actually really into that and he is learning something from it"* (Stuart, Reflective conversation).

I evaluate the degree of critical reflection involved in these described changes to determine the quality of the transformation and the possibility of sustainability.

I view critical reflection as deliberate thinking about actions, with a view for improvement through active consideration of other perspectives (theoretical, professional, or other viewpoints). It involves a questioning attitude that leads to an inquiry process to test ideas and synthesize new ideas. Critical reflection at its highest level is transformative and challenges the fundamental assumptions and purposes that underpin why we do things in the way that we do.

There appears to be an awareness of changed understanding in the way that Ricky and Stuart reflect on the outcomes and processes of the research but there isn't evidence of critical examination of underlying assumptions, purposes and implications for transformative change. Practice without consciousness and the possibility that without ongoing input, growth will not continue and change will not be sustained.

5.7. Emerging understanding: Reflexivity as a catalyst for change

I believe that reflexivity (Breuer, Mruck & Roth, 2002; Lipp, 2008; Riley, Schouten & Cahill, 2003; Sullivan, 2002;) is an over arching term that encompasses reflection and critical reflection. Reflexivity is the ability to bring multiple voices to a system or practice and engage in dialogical processes to critically examine how our values, beliefs, and experiences influence our actions and how our actions also influence our values, beliefs and experiences and then how we respond with self-awareness. Sandywell (2005) describes reflexivity as “a reminder of our material involvement within a larger whole, of being connected to larger constellations of experience, being involved with others and exemplifying that involvement in the course and conduct of our own practices” (paragraph 2). Reflexivity is core to change within the context of this research. I am using reflexivity as a means of understanding the dynamics of change and I am using reflexivity as integral to that change.

As researcher I bring a participatory (Heron and Reason, 1997) perspective to the research process. The choices I made in preparation for the research such as selecting problem based methodology as a framework and conversations as a tool for data gathering enabled opportunity to attend to the subjectivity and inter-subjectivity between researcher/participant and co-researchers/participants and allowed for dialogical communication. Participatory research foregrounds critical, subjectivity and living knowledge and in this way I have shaped the thinking in this research.

As RTLB I bring a dynamic ecological process (Hannant, Lim and McAllum, 2010) of reflexivity. As I search for understanding of learning situations, I am continually moving between and respectful of, the underpinning beliefs, values and experiences of teacher, student and self. Actions are collaboratively negotiated based on informed, practical judgements about how to act in the given situation. Carr and Kemmis (1986) labelled informed, committed action as praxis. Within praxis, there is no prior knowledge of the right way to act in a particular situation but through collective reflexivity on available information and responses to interventions, the appropriate actions emerge. Praxis involves interpretation, understanding and application in one unified process. Praxis is creative, other-seeking and dialogic (Taylor, 1993). As RTLB, I bring a range of academic voices to my professional conversations to support teacher's critical reflection on their practice and to challenge actions that perpetuate ineffectiveness. Without critical reflection, teachers respond in routine ways and rationalise problematic situations with adherence to single minded approaches because alternative ways of responding are not recognised (Giroux, 2004). Likewise, without critical reflection learners also remain locked into preferred ways of behaving, seeking responses that maximise a need for fun. Barriers to effective reflexive practice include classrooms that isolate teachers; curriculum requirements that are interpreted in a prescriptive way; teacher workloads that are excessive; monitoring systems that have an unbalanced focus on assessment, achievement standards and reporting; and professional development that is disconnected from the classroom reality (Fullan, 2007).

Reflexivity that informs change demands a range of conditions favourable to praxis. Teachers as reflexive practitioners need time and support to think about their underlying beliefs and values. They need opportunity to explore effectiveness in their own programmes and in programmes of others. They need opportunity for professional development that is connected to the reality of their classroom settings and opportunity to share in professional learning communities focusing on and building group capacity as teachers and learners. Teachers need support for personalising learning to meet the identified needs of the learner and flexibility to be able to adapt in response to the diverse learning needs of multi-cultures, multi-learning styles, and multi-social experiences of learners. Teachers need to work in

school environments that encourage innovation with opportunity to collectively reflect innovative projects. This research process gave teachers and learners time to be reflexive, an opportunity to take risks and experiment with innovative practices, time to reflect on effectiveness and professional learning that was connected to the classroom setting. We were able to engage in praxis and reflexivity for change within the context of a small slice of classroom practice.

A key reflexive moment for Stuart was when he described how the research had challenged his thinking about different learning styles. Stuart identified that he 'had loosened up' and that he was more willing to let Ricky do things in his way. "*He is just doing it differently from how I would want it done. So I have let go from that point of view*" (Stuart, Reflective conversation). He described how he saw himself as a linear learner and how he had organised Ricky's learning in a linear way. Since the research he felt that he now understood Ricky as a non-linear learner and felt he was able to be more accepting of a different way of learning. "*I have seen it in action and I have seen someone who learns in a very, very different way and having your support for something like this has helped me cope with it*" (Stuart, Reflective conversation). Stuart was also beginning to understand the way that the teacher is positioned in the classroom as the source of power and how students can become unwitting partners in the process of control. In his reflective conversation Stuart was beginning to articulate how his teacher relationship with Ricky had become a reflection of how other students related to Ricky. As his relationship became more positive then students relationships with Ricky became more positive. "*[The research has] helped his social standing in the class....They would see him as on the computer and doing work, because your work was on the computer and unless I make a comment therefore it validates his role in the classroom*" (Stuart, Reflective conversation).

The key reflexive moment for me in this case study was when Ricky and I were locked in the struggle over his 'making a difference' response to the learning he had done in relation to the game. My teacher values and beliefs informed and supported by the New Zealand curriculum were directing me towards an environmental response about how civilisations had impacted on the earth. Ricky's values and beliefs were to continue to have fun and freedom through higher levels of challenge within the pro-version of the game. His continued resistance to my perspective forced me to think

back to my 'participatory' values and beliefs and I was able adjust to accommodate his direction, recognising how my values and beliefs were imposing on his. My teacher values and beliefs have been challenged and I am questioning my interpretation of the curriculum. My thinking has been awakened to the power within curriculum to position selected knowledge as more valuable than others and I am becoming more sensitive to interest groups that drive curriculum. In time and after surveying the available evidence I will maintain or reform my teaching values and beliefs.

Chapter Six

Finn: Still waters run deep.

Like an oily skin of liquid mercury his presence permeated the room. Others deferred to him. Was it his calmness or was there something else? He dismissed other's chatter with a simple comment and asserted his authority in that space. He engaged, but his sharings were calculated, at times manipulative as he hinted at deeply disturbing other worlds. Truth, untruth, reality and fantasy merged and re-emerged. He was hidden and remained hidden behind a myriad of truths and untruths.

His teacher is earnest, deeply thoughtful, at times philosophical, seeking a deeper meaning. She works hard to bridge perspectives and understand. Her need to control is born from a desire to achieve as a teacher, maybe she is a perfectionist? (Field notes, Aug 2008)

Vital Statistics (Aug 2008)

Name:	Finn
Rank:	Yr 8
Age:	12yrs
Reading:	Probe 15yrs
Writing:	Imaginative, creative author
Maths:	Stage 6
Passion:	Computer Games
Genre:	Perfectionist, non risk taker, non-optimist
Ambition:	Game Critic
Strength;	Perceptive, intuitive, sensitive, philosophical
Quote:	School is very boring and very painful

6.1. Insights from a learning conversation

6.1.1 We hear

Finn is bored. His response to the opening activity of having a camera to record his day, was a single photograph of his cell phone saying, *'This is boring!!!!!!!!!!!!'* A complex response in itself and possibly an attempt to relieve his boredom without

engaging too deeply in any task. The task he was engaged in at the time was writing an article for the school newsletter. His poem of discovery reads as that expected of a disconnected learner.

*Don't like spec,
The teacher's a wanker!
Don't see the point of what we do
Sitting around listening to teachers yak on about stuff I already know
BORING
Important to understand the point of what we do
Otherwise
I don't do it
Want to learn about computers and how they work
Here they use computers to write stuff up which is really boring.
I am interested in finding out about programming.
Favourite Game Jak 2
I like computer work
Would be fun to be challenged for once
School is very boring and very painful
Kids need options of what they could do.
Choice of what you do in reading and writing
Flexibility in day
Would enjoy flexibility
(Finn, Poem of Discovery)*

He has poor relationships with peers, weak relationships with his teachers and he is rebellious. Finn describes how he feels rejected by his peers. He is sensitive to their negativity and confronts this with his own brand of negativity which can be aggressive. *"I come to school because I am a punching bag for several people. Everyone who hates me gangs up on me and that's pretty much it. I have one friend..... I'm not exactly Mr popular in the whole school, I don't know why. When I first came to this school I was pretty popular then they were insulting some kid and I started to hang out with him and then I became unpopular"* (Finn, Learning conversation). He recognises his friend as also smart and describes their boredom with school as the uniting bond of friendship. *"I got on with Josh because we were the smart ones. We were able to be bored together waiting for others to catch up"* (Finn, Learning conversation). He also describes himself as antisocial and sees this in a positive light as it avoids the bullying. *"Prefer to be with people my own age or younger, antisocial a bit. If I'm anti social it prevents bullying"* (Finn, Learning conversation). Finn's observations read like a text book on gifted kids. He describes the pain of a slow pace, rejection, not fitting and seems resigned to his fate.

His teacher voices similar observations about relationships. She is aware of his social issues and raises the possibility of poor social skills. *"Socially reserved...Struggles to*

socialise with others....Self focused...No evidence of empathy for others...Seems to lack skills to relate unless of similar thinking and mischievousness” (Rachel, Learning conversation). Within these comments there is a hint of Rachel searching for a label for some underlying condition to explain and manage Finn’s difficult behaviours. Her observation of rejection by his peers does not seem to register as a possible cause for his social awkwardness and I connect the two. She describes a vicious cycle of rejection, aggression, reconciliation and further rejection. *“Rejected by classmates...reputation for trouble ... can be rude to others and puts them down....can interact well but then chooses not to...can be very rude to others and doesn’t seem to be aware that he hurts them...at times will close off...he’s unpredictable and seems to choose not to relate because he doesn’t like some people for some reason*” (Rachel, Learning conversation). In conclusion she felt that Finn seemed ‘*a bit confused*’ and often seemed arrogant to others. Rachel is aware of Finn’s emotional sensitivities. *“Very emotional, has real emotions. Could be puberty at this point in time..... Very sensitive and very perceptive..... Very intense and can be very aggressive. Others don’t understand his intensity*” (Rachel, Learning conversation). I affirm these as characteristics of giftedness and indicators of possible giftedness when performance is missing (Ackerman & Paulus, 1997; Gross, 1998; Lovecky, 1992; Silverman, 2007).

Finn’s lack of connection with school is also evident in the way he describes his learning. *“I am interested in finding out about programming.....I like computer workFavourite Game Jak 2Would be fun to be challenged for once.... Sometimes I slack off in maths, get bored because I do things that I already know. I multi task and read as well as do maths when I’m bored*” (Finn, Learning conversation). He recognises that he has strengths in reading, maths and gaming and knows that he is able to think logically. Computers are a source of fascination and he wants to learn how they work. He has an ambition to be a gaming tester and has already contacted a gaming company to find out what is involved. He parallels his interest in gaming and programming with the way computers are used by schools as a tool for recording ideas and he laments the lack of challenge and continual feelings of boredom. He openly owns that school is just about compliance and his heart is elsewhere. *“[I] Come to school because I am forced to by my Mum and the law. I would rather stay at home and play on play station*” (Finn, Learning conversation).

Rachel also describes disengagement and personally struggles with feelings of failure in her efforts to engage him. *"I feel frustrated when he doesn't perform. I don't know how to work with him. Have not done justice with him because of his inconsistencies"* (Rachel, Learning conversation). She views Finn as the problem and describes him as a talented student with potential in all areas of the curriculum. In the past he had competed in writing competitions and mathematical challenges and this year he had rejected an opportunity to compete, despite having a real chance of winning. Rachel describes Finn as a student with exciting ideas when he does engage but she has difficulty knowing what does motivate him. *"Finn seems to need something and I want to give him more time but I have 29 other kids in the class... Don't know what his real switch is"* (Rachel, Learning conversation). She described a positive strategy that she used to engage Finn during speech writing. Finn's speech had been easily completed to a high standard well before others in the class and Rachel had trained Finn to be a judge in the presentations. *"When he worked alongside the teacher assessing speeches he did the job really well and gave constructive, meaningful feedback"* (Rachel, Learning conversation). Rachel reflected on this strategy and its effectiveness and compared it to another time when she had tried to make Finn accountable for each minute step in a piece of work, checking with the teacher for satisfactory completion before he moved on. She realised that this strategy was too slow for him and only resulted in frustration. *"My processes are too slow for him therefore structuring his learning is too slow and doesn't work"* (Rachel, Learning conversation). Rachel also described how she had used the computer as a motivator for his work. Finn had investigated and critiqued computer games for children. *"He loves the computer. I used it as a motivating topic. He worked on an activity researching games for the computer that were appropriate for kids to play at school. Researched the computer games well and gave constructive feedback with recommendations"* (Rachel, Learning conversation). Rachel's goal for Finn was to 'hook' him into something powerful that they would follow through with to the end and have a really neat learning experience together.

6.1.2. I connect: On boredom

What is boredom? Does boredom have its own dynamic and does it have a function? How do gifted students experience boredom?

Research on boredom in school is not extensive despite students' frequent claims to being bored. Larson (1991) described boredom as an emotion associated with either situations that were perceived as repetitive and under-stimulating or student dispositions such as alienation, low motivation or resistance to mental effort. Vodonavich, Wallace and Kass (2005) identified two key factors in relation to boredom proneness – internal factors: perceived inability to generate sufficient stimulation for oneself and external factors: high need for variety and change. Kanevsky and Keighley (2003) exploring boredom in gifted students identified five interdependent features that distinguished boring from learning experiences – sense of control, choice, challenge, complexity and caring teachers. Interviews with gifted students reporting boredom found a growing sense of moral indignation toward the activities they were offered as an "education" resulting in a conscious decision to disengage. Kanevsky and Keighley's core findings were that learning was the opposite of boredom and that learning was the antidote to boredom.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) described boredom as the antithesis of flow. Flow is subjective and characterised by a state of effortless attention while engaged in intense experiential activity. During flow experiences a person functions to their fullest capacity merging action and awareness, experiencing a sense of control and an altered sense of time. Flow, occurs when a learner's skills match the level of challenge presented by a task and when there are clear goals and immediate feedback. Tasks that are too easy become boring and in contrast, tasks that are perceived to be too difficult lead to anxiety.

6.2. We ponder: Dynamics of boredom

Finn described boredom and his teacher described a gifted non-producer. Using Kanevsky and Keighley's '5 C's' - control, choice, challenge, complexity and caring - we were able to appreciate the dynamics of Finn's boredom.

6.2.1. Control

Finn spoke clearly about a need for control and self determination in what he was doing. *"It is important to understand the point of what we do otherwise I don't do it. At tech we just get a card and have to copy it out. I don't like drawing at all"* (Finn, Learning conversation). He described an attempt to gain a sense of control over his

learning when he outlined how he had contacted a gaming company using the information on the packaging and had requested information about game testing and how a person could become a game tester. His refusal to enter a writing competition even though he had a chance to win was the voice of resistance. He described his previous experience as repetitive and meaningless. *‘Did it last year and the process was really slow and had to be checked at every stage by J (supporting teacher). It took up a lot of my time last year, missed two of my friend’s birthday because I had to work on it. Didn’t want to give up my time again’* (Finn, Strategic conversation). Even though he received a highly commended this was not sufficiently motivating for him to enter again.

6.2.2. Choice

Finn understands his need for choice. This is strongly linked to his attempts for control. *“School is very boring and very painful. This school needs an electronics room to enable people to bring their gear. Kids need options of what they can do. If I had choice of what to do in reading and writing I would engage. Flexibility in the day? I would enjoy flexibility”* (Finn, Strategic conversation). Finn expects his opinions and interests to be reflected in his education.

6.2.3. Challenge

Finn craves challenge and fast pace in his learning. *“I like computer work. Would be fun to be challenged for once. Maths is repetitive. I already understand circumferences and perimeters”* (Finn, Learning conversation). His teacher is also aware of how the slow pace is impacting on Finn’s engagement. *“I absolutely understand that a lot of the work that he is asked to do is unchallenging. I may have been pedantic in demanding perfection at each stage and slowed down the learning process”* (Rachel, Strategic conversation). Finn recognised the strong bond he had with his one friend as an ally in the boring wait for others to catch up. *“I got on with Josh because we were the smart ones we were able to be bored together waiting for others to catch up”* (Finn, Learning conversation).

6.2.4. Complexity

Finn described how he played with complexity at night when he had trouble sleeping. *“Usually when I don’t want to sleep I sit there and come up with random problems in*

our house and see if I can solve them” (Finn, Learning conversation). Kanevsky and Keighley (2003) outline how gifted students express a preference for rich, messy content with thinking processes that engage analytical thought and creativity and trigger opportunities for sophisticated and authentic products. This contrasts sharply with Finn’s description of school as *“sitting around listening to teachers yak on about stuff I already know”* (Finn, Learning conversation).

6.2.5. Caring

Finn’s relationship with teachers was mixed. His opening statement of one teacher was *“He’s a wanker!”* (Finn, Learning conversation). But he also appreciated his connection with the librarian and her offer to take him to meet an author who was coming to the local community. Rachel found him to be mostly respectful and well mannered. Finn is clear about his feelings of isolation in regards to his peers. *“Antisocial a bit, if I’m anti- social it prevents bullying”* (Finn, Learning conversation). Caring relationships are respectful of partnership in the learning process. Kanevsky and Keighley’s research identified caring teachers as willing to negotiate control over some aspects of students learning relevant to their skills, abilities, and interests, and allowed individual exploration and group work with substantial in-class interaction.

6.3. We Negotiate

With Kanevsky and Keighley’s ‘5 C’s’ - control, choice, challenge, complexity and caring - in mind, we negotiated. The strategic conversation was a platform for discussing giftedness with both Finn and Rachel. Triggered by statements from the learning conversations, organised and recorded as action theories, we talked about difference, choice, flexibility, motivation and other factors contributing to disengagement. The understanding led to the negotiation of a reading contract based on Rachel’s suggestion of a New Zealand author study. Her planning for term four was to offer the class an opportunity to work independently researching a New Zealand author. In negotiation with Finn this was quickly adapted to be an author study of the Jak series of interactive games. Finn enthusiastically shared his depth of passion for the story of the game and together we were able to negotiate parallels with Rachel’s learning intentions for the author study. The negotiation’s ended with a

commitment to the goal of hooking Finn into a learning experience that would be enjoyed and completed together.

6.4. We make meaning

I was on the brink and you just realise and suddenly you get motivated. I was just motivated and given the space to make it work. And I was able to work with friends. (Finn, Reflective conversation)

It has helped so much that I just feel so much more comfortable with having him in the class and I didn't feel afraid to say go with what you think. Go for it. He could come and say things to me and this was especially good because it was junk to funk time and he would say can I do a movie with Leon and I would say yes you can because I could trust him and I knew this was an area he was really into. And he turned out a fantastic presentation. (Rachel, Reflective conversation)

As with Dexter and Ricky shift happened. Unlike Dexter and Ricky the shift was independent of my direct input. After an initial meeting to share and clarify the direction of the reading inquiry, Rachel led Finn's learning and I checked occasionally to ensure everything was progressing smoothly. Each time my confidence grew as to the power of our learning and strategic conversations. Rachel was confident in her ability to support Finn with his learning having been given a fresh insight into his learning characteristics. Finn was responding positively, accepting responsibility for his learning and building a relationship of trust with his teacher. *"He would say can I go and practise it and I would say yes you can because I knew he wouldn't go and goof off because he was really interested in that piece of work. I felt really good and really empowered to say yes you can. I don't know why it wasn't like that before hand, but it [the strategic conversations] just made it clearer and maybe we could trust each other in the end. Out of trust more trust came – yes"* (Rachel, Reflective conversation). I was privileged to observe a particularly electric learning moment when I quietly entered a room where Finn and his learning partner were working on a technology project. They had designed a mechanical toy and were engaged in the task of developing a presentation to share the learning processes they

had used and the outcome of their learning. I share my field notes where I tried to capture the energy of that moment.

Red glowing energy. Finn and his friend, laughing, hunched over a computer, their ideas tumbling around as they search for the connection to enable the idea to become reality. What if ..no what if...

What if - two powerfully creative words. Ideas shift back and forth, some are grabbed and are moulded and shaped before being privileged to be included. They sense an alien presence and turn to greet me, slightly awkward. Had they been having far too much fun? Was I there to contain, to squash, to interfere or jolt them into some other realm?

Finn takes the plunge and starts to explain. My non-interference gave him courage and he shares the powerful learning journey they were on. They were exploring a technological system and were using trial and error to problem solve the issues they were having in making their design a reality. They were capturing their learning journey using a range of technologies (animations, movie maker, sound clips). The room is electric with innovation. They are engaged and learning is alive and well. (Field notes, Nov 2008)

Similar influencing dynamics teased out of the reflective conversations for the previous case studies, were also evident in Finn's and Rachel's reflective conversations.

6.4.1. Relationship

The key change for Finn in terms of relationship was the partnership he formed with his teacher. Rachel attributed the change in attitude and receptiveness to the strategic conversation where she felt there was clarity of vision. *"I think it's that whole clarity of vision. All of a sudden we didn't have all that petty annoyance. It was just that we didn't quite communicate properly or something, I can't even tell you what it was but it seems to be much clearer now, which means his work has been so much better and his communications with other kids has been so much better, which has had spin offs for me because he is not a problem student any more and he was a serious mark in the class"* (Rachel, Reflective conversation). Rachel also noted that Finn was less

defensive and more open to direction. She appreciated his insightful contributions to problem situations. *“He has some insightful things to say and he is not as nasty, he still is a bit cheeky and uses bad language, but he is a lot happier to be told off about it and it’s not you’re picking on me”* (Rachel, Reflective conversation). Again as in Ricky’s case studies, the change in relationship with the teacher had a positive influence on the relationship with peers. Finn also noted a change in his relationship with others. *“Being able to work in a team with my friends has given me someone else to work with and I am able to compare my work with others to know if I am behind, or forward, or just average. Friends have developed this term. Have a stronger relationships because they are the right sort of people”* (Finn, Reflective conversation).

6.4.2. Understanding and acknowledging difference

Finn felt that there was better understanding of him. *“Rachel is beginning to understand my sense of humour. She is understanding me more....there have been changes in how she taught me – a bit easier”* (Finn, Reflective conversation). Rachel identifies that her initial hesitation to label Finn as gifted had been challenged through our conversation where we raised the possibility that his negative behaviours were evidence of frustration due to a slow pace and lack of complexity in his learning. She made significant changes to her teaching and was able to accommodate choice, freedom for Finn to lead learning and opportunities for creative responses using a range of technologies.

Always been a bit cynical about gifted and talented children. I did this paper and it did lay out the rules that some children are bright and but they are not gifted and talented and you have to learn that difference so I have had a very staunch view about whether a person is gifted or not. Couldn’t see where it was with him...Perhaps my own bias got in the way. Because of the rocky relationship we had and he wouldn’t understand where I was coming from and where I was trying to get him at because I’m a bit of a straight forward person. He wouldn’t do it my way and so I understand it now. After going through that[conversations] it really woke me up and said help me (Rachel, Reflective conversation).

Finn's intensities were visible in the way he enthusiastically described his favourite play station game when we were negotiating and Rachel was able to embrace this passion in all his learning. When I observed him working on his technology project his intensity was clearly evident. Rachel noted a distinct difference in his mood for the last term of the year and Finn's last term at this school before secondary school.

He has been a little more lighter spirit since the beginning of this term, he's been happy and it's like a little dark cloud has lifted off him and I think this process helped it. We had some major ups and downs and this has helped to facilitate and smooth out the bumps and it is about communication and understanding on both parts (Rachel, Reflective conversation).

Rachel is beginning to articulate a deeper understanding of gifted intensities and sensitivities when she comments about the difference between gifted learners and non-gifted learners as being the degree to which they are aware of the social and emotional needs and how this impacts on their learning. *"Gifted kids articulate about likes and dislikes and seem to be more self centred and willing to focus on what upsets them while other kids are more easy going and willing to go two ways"* (Rachel, Reflective conversation).

6.4.3. Opportunity to learn differently

Having acknowledged that Finn had gifted characteristics and that he was experiencing frustrations with his learning it was a natural progression for Rachel to provide alternative learning opportunities within her learning programme. The flexibility and independent learning opportunities based on Finn's interests, in our initial reading contract were extended to all of Finn's learning. Finn recognised the impact of flexibility and choice and described his appreciation of the opportunity for flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). *"Opportunity to have time to run with an idea. Usually just starting to make progress then have to go onto something else"* (Finn, Reflective conversation). Rachel also as quoted above described how insight into how Finn was feeling helped her to respond to Finn in a different way so that she was able to support his learning by giving him more freedom to explore options and to work independently. She describes a learning focused relationship as opposed to the controlling relationship focused on behaviour that guided interactions prior to our research partnership.

6.4.4. Raised expectations

Rachel always had high expectations of Finn, she just didn't have the understanding of how to 'hook' him into the learning process. Finn had high expectations of himself but he didn't feel that his learning programme gave him the opportunity to realise those expectations. As a result of our research project, Rachel identifies that she has adjusted the expectations of herself and has modified the way she interacts with Finn. *"Probably still talk a lot and lecture a lot, but as far as Finn's concerned I've freed up a lot. More willing to have conversation rather than just giving instructions and probably a little more prepared to listen to"* (Rachel, Reflective conversation).

6.5. I reflect: On change

Using the rubric for change, analysis shows that Rachel thinks reflexively at times. As she shares you can hear the dialogic processes in her conversation. There is evidence of cycles of questions, and actions indicative of consideration of other perspectives and new insights.

Sometimes I struggled to really hold on to the good things about him. And this kid is supposed to be gifted and talented and I sit down with him and tell him that I believe that he is but with this behaviour maybe I'm wrong and having that kind of conversation with him and thinking, if you are bright then you will understand what I am saying. Completely the wrong way to go about it really. But it was really desperation. I want to help but I don't know how (Rachel, Reflective conversation).

In hearing Finn's voice, Rachel was able to challenge her own thinking about giftedness, in hearing the perspective of other educators in gifted education she was able to let go of previously hidden assumptions and take a risk with a different way. *"But in doing it I could see how he thought about things and how he thought things were going... .. I felt really good and really empowered to say yes you can"* (Rachel, Reflective conversation). The changes she made to her practice included flexibility, openness to partnership in the learning process and choice. This resulted in Finn being engaged and demonstrating creative achievement in his technology project, completing the reading contract on Jak and completing an author study with the rest of the class.

Part of the increased work output was also in response to family controls on phone use. *“But the reading contract wasn’t that I didn’t want to do it, it was just that I couldn’t find the time and then when I wasn’t on the phone I had time and my mum saw that and I wasn’t allowed on the phone”* (Finn, Reflective conversation). This was an unintended action and signals a significant shortcoming of the research project. The initial proposal for the research planned for partnership with family. Families were invited to share in initial learning conversations but the times frames and complexity of the project meant that I did not pursue active family collaboration.

For Finn the changes were a response to the changes that Rachel made to her programme and involved independent engagement at times. I observed active, enthusiastic engagement with learning in a random classroom visit. Rachel described a lighter mood and a fantastic technology presentation. Finn’s reflective conversation did not readily identify learning changes. It was only after gentle probing and reminders of some of the positive learning experiences of the term that he was able to describe changed relationships with teacher and peers and greater engagement with learning activities. Finn’s description of the changes for his learning and relationships were self focused and routine. There was only one example of insightfulness when he described the positive effect of being able to work for extended periods without interruption.

6.6. I reflect critically: On reflexivity

What made the difference for Finn’s engagement?

Analysis of Finn’s reflective conversation did not indicate a conscious decision on Finn’s part to engage or any changes to Finn’s approach to learning. His reflective conversation revealed that he wasn’t even aware of the shifts in practice that Rachel described other than to say it was *a bit easier*. Yet I observed the ‘wow’ factor when Finn and his learning partner were debating creative possibilities for presenting their learning during a technology project. I noted that they were moving between a range of presentation genre – drama, powerpoint and demonstration. I heard Finn and his friend discuss key ideas related to their learning journey – the barriers they had met and how they had problem solved using trial and error and critical reflection. I saw evidence of critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, written and oral communication, creativity, self-direction, adaptability, responsibility and global

awareness in one moment of their Junk to Funk project. Powerful, rich, independent engagement, not disengaged defiance as described in our learning conversation. The reflective conversation with Rachel revealed that a possible difference for Finn and his learning was a change in teaching style from controlling to flexible and trusting partnership. A changed teaching style may have contributed to revealing the 'me' behind the mask.

Each of our three case studies has shown that a changed teaching style makes a difference for these learners. For Dexter it was about creative opportunity, for Ricky it was about authenticity and for Finn it was about flexible, trusting partnership. I was the teacher responsible for leading engagement with Dexter. A clumsy partnership between Stuart and myself, led engagement with Ricky and Rachel was the leader of engagement for Finn.

What made the difference for each of these teacher's in the way they accepted responsibility for engaging in changed practice?

These teachers articulated similar understandings of giftedness in our learning conversations. They described talent with an expectation that giftedness was about high achievement and production. They identified moments of different thinking and disengaged behaviours that they believed needed modifying or controlling. Through the conversations there was an emerging understanding of the social and emotional needs of giftedness and how circumstances were contributing to social and emotional responses and disengagement. Emerging understanding seemed to come more quickly for Rachel who also seemed to be more reflexive in her thinking as she engaged in the research process, while Stuart came to an emerging understanding at the end of the process. As a beginning teacher Brad was possibly overwhelmed by the process and his conversation demonstrated little reflexive thought.

Reflexivity underpins change, especially transformative change. Our learning conversations laid a foundation for examining and questioning underlying assumptions in how we understood and viewed each other and in how we practiced teaching and learning in the way that we did. We asked ourselves what we were doing and why in a way that was characteristic of reflective in line with Smyth (1992).

So why was reflexive thinking not strongly evident in our reflective conversations?

Reflexivity is a socio-cultural phenomenon. Sandywell (2005) described reflexivity as a synonym for 'critical' or 'self-critical' discourse and recognized that the history of both classical and contemporary social theory is littered with unreflexive paradigms and to see a flourishing of alternative reflexive frameworks would require a complete re-education of basic ways of thinking and discourse. As teachers in the age group 40 to 55 years, we are a product of a westernised education process and I believe this process for the most part shaped passive learners. We were often discouraged from questioning and thinking about our learning, we were moulded to listen and follow instructions and mostly we churned out row upon row of replicated stories, artworks, answers to mathematical algorithms, decoded reading material and paraphrased answers to comprehension question that checked for understanding. We are the product of an industrialised system that valued replication, national examinations for standardisation, regurgitation over process and reflective processes that checked for conformity. Reflexivity was unknown.

Currently reflective practice is evident in our teaching discourse but as evidenced in a recent National Educational Review Office Report (2009), schools do not seem to have a proactive agenda to facilitate and value teacher's critical reflection of their practice as part of professional development processes and consequently few teachers practice critical reflection skilfully as a natural process of their work. The school that Stuart and Rachel work in are exploring the ideas but there is a tension with teachers already struggling with curriculum demands and high teacher-pupil ratios. Current external demands on reporting and national standards reduce the reflective analysis that does occur to the level of comparing scores as opposed to deeper reflections on situations, practices, underlying assumptions and driving agendas.

Chapter Seven

Engagement for Praxis: Praxis for Engagement

7.1. Engagement for praxis

Engagement is a complex behaviour. It is essential for learning whether it be learning that involves transformative change or learning for development and growth. I view learning that is transformational as being learning that involves changes to already formed beliefs and values while learning that is development and growth as being learning that forms underlying beliefs and values. Lave and Wenger (1998) describe learning as social and situated and they focus on participation as central to learning. Their concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' outlines how trajectories of participation from peripheral to full, from novice to master, develop within a community of practice and how these trajectories are visible through changes to the learner's identity. I equate Lave and Wenger's concept of learner identity to the underlying values and beliefs that informed Theories of Action of participants in this research. Changes to our practice through negotiation, challenged some of our underlying beliefs and laid the foundations for transformative change placing us on a learning trajectory with the possibility of moving toward deeper understanding of hidden giftedness and partnerships in learning.

This research is underpinned by a constructivist paradigm for learning in that learning is an active, contextualised and constructed process and learners are viewed as information constructors continually forming and testing hypotheses about the nature of the world around them. Consequently we were looking for engagement that was physically and cognitively active. For students I looked for evidence of engagement in the form of 'negotiating things' for learning, 'doing things' related to the negotiated tasks and 'sharing things' discovered. For teachers I looked for evidence of engagement in the form of 'co-creating things' for the learning pathway, 'sharing things' observed and 'questioning things' in their teaching practices and underlying philosophies of practice.

Boylan (2010) writes about ecologies of participation and uses the metaphor to describe participation as "a multidimensional way of being in the world in which the

extent and nature of participation emerges as part of the interplay of the meaning of the practice in the life world, the on-going identity work of the participant, and the constraints and possibilities of the situation. Any one of these components may be the deciding factor in whether a learner engages or not” (p. 68). Similarly, four dimensions emerged from our reflections on engagement – partnership, capability, authenticity and reflexive inquiry and these seem to relate to Boylan’s interplay of meaning, constraints and ongoing identity work. For example, when partnership was high and capability heavily scaffolded, Ricky was able to partially complete the cross classification chart comparing civilisations but quality was compromised. When authenticity was high for Ricky, he was able to *independently* overcome his lack of capability by seeking the knowledge and understanding required for playing the computer game or game making through the help menus and the expertise of other classmates. But when the authenticity was low and his capability was low, as in the task requiring thought about the future of our civilisation, Ricky did not have the persistence to seek out the knowledge and understanding required. When inquiry was high, Ricky was able to problem solve by identify the programming behind sample games and he was able to independently adapt it to make his own games.

Similarly with teachers, when partnership was strong, Stuart worked with me to problem solve moments of disengagement and manage Ricky’s distractibility. When partnership was low teachers surrendered involvement and allowed me to manage the learning as with Brad and Dexter’s movie making task. When authenticity was high, Rachel embraced the language and tools of negotiated curriculum and trusted Finn to freely explore and develop his own creative technology project. When authenticity was low Brad was unable to integrate the movie making project into his classroom programme. When inquiry was high, Rachel transformed her practice in response to Finn’s need for pace and depth in his learning. When inquiry was low, there was little evidence of reflexivity and teachers accepted my inputs without question or challenge to me or their own practice.

Within my work as RTLB, engagement is not only multidimensional but also multidirectional. I am seeking engagement with and between students, teachers, families, school management, school communities and outside agencies. RTLB practice also focuses on the dynamic between student, teacher and task and I place

this dynamic within the interplay of the components of engagement identified in our research. Task is placed on a continuum that is either closely aligned to the teacher or to the learner in that either the teacher or the learner has the greatest influence over the task. Teachers lead the components of partnership and capability in designing tasks that effectively engage, while learners determine which tasks are authentic for them and how much reflexive inquiry effort a task warrants (see fig 1). As a whole, each of the components are interconnected with greatest engagement happening when all components work together but if some components are weak then other components can compensate so that engagement still happens.

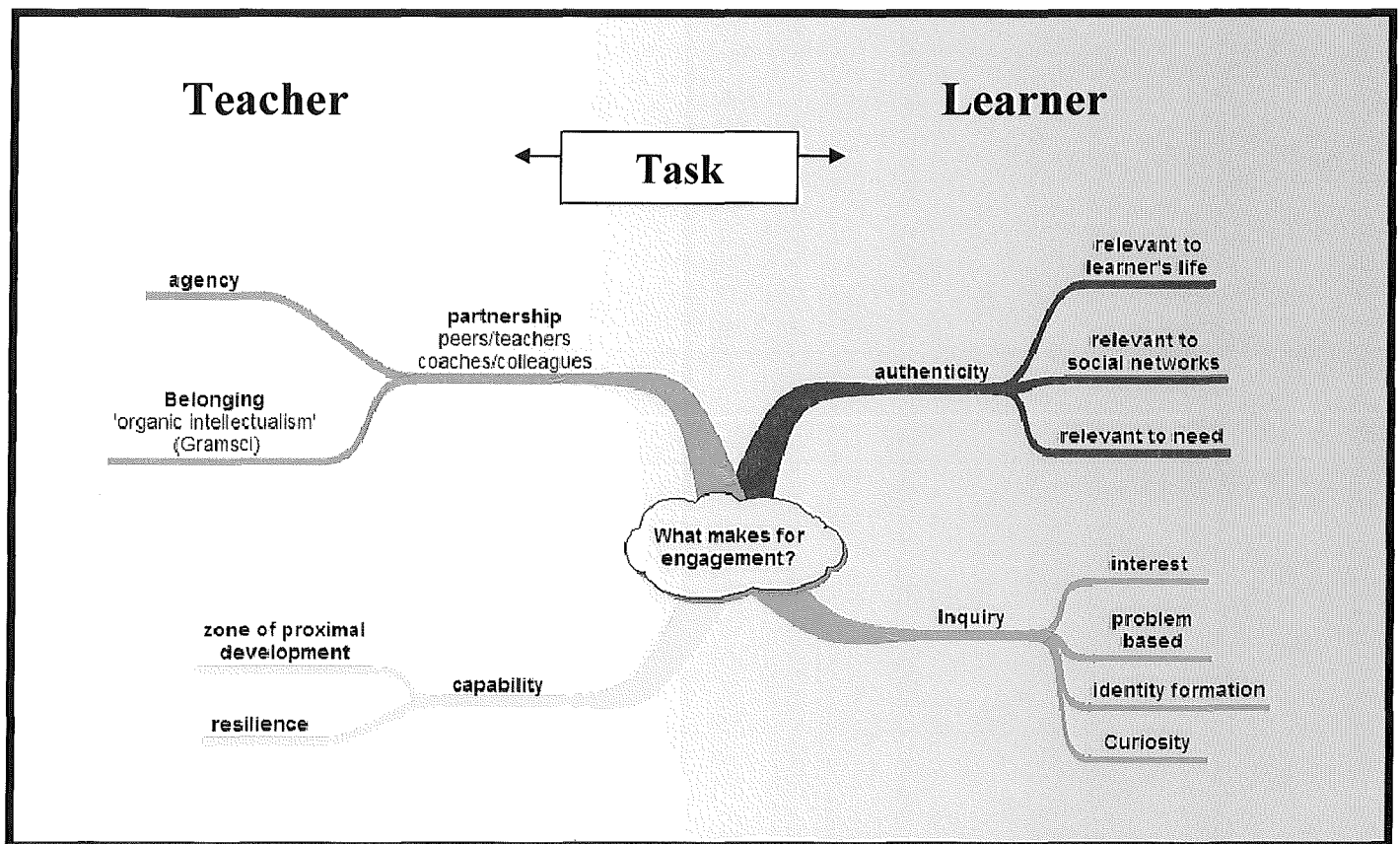


Fig 3: Proposed model of engagement and the influencing dynamics as identified in the reflective conversations and researcher field notes.

7.1.1. Partnership

Learning is a dialectical process requiring the support of significant others (Vygotsky, 1978; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Socio-cultural learning theory stresses the active contribution of other people in the learner's community. Vygotsky described a process of intersubjectivity for learning, whereby learners negotiate a shared understanding in partnership with a more knowledgeable other. Bronfenbrenner elaborated on other environmental influences in this process including personal characteristics, interest differences, persistence and tendency to engage and age differences.

Within the research I observed that the availability of others played a significant role in engagement. Dexter and Finn were both engaged in creative projects involving experimentation and discovery. Dexter in particular needed constant affirmation and reassurance to support his risk taking. He willingly experimented but openly sought affirmation for what he was doing as if needing permission to push the boundaries. During the creative process it seemed as if there were times where Dexter needed me to offer an idea just so he could reject it and then think of something better. Finn sought his support from a friend and when reflecting on what made a difference for him in his learning, he acknowledged the need to bounce ideas off of another person. Ricky in particular responded with high levels of engagement when he had a teacher helping him to interpret and speculate about possibilities and without this support he tended to disengage and seek activities where he felt safe, often a computer game that only required reactive responding. Within his negotiated learning pathway he needed constant attention from a 'more knowledgeable other' to maintain engagement and visibly displayed enthusiastic delight with each achievements made. At times his 'more knowledgeable others' took the form of teacher, peer, computer or RTLB. Vygotsky (1978) describes this dependence on other for interpreting, recollecting and speculating as an integral part of working at the top of the zone of proximal development.

Partnership is about belonging and agency and this research was founded on principles of belongingness and agency. I describe belonging and agency in terms of connection. For students in this research, that connection was based on being understood and accepted for their giftedness. Similarly the teacher's sense of

belonging and agency within the partnership was based on being understood and accepted for who they were as educators, working to the best of their abilities, to meet the needs of learners and the requirements of school policies and curriculum. Partnership was enhanced by embracing each person's organic intellectualism (Gramsci, 1971, as cited in Brookfield, 2003). Within this research organic intellectualism was acknowledged through our theories of action identified in our learning conversations and valued as fundamental to the methodology of the research because it provided the initial data for ongoing reflection. This process contributed positively to our partnerships and in particular for Rachel and Dexter who were able to engage in a more reflexive way.

Agency was further enhanced through the culture of collective learning and teamwork initiated by juxtaposing student voice and teacher voice in the strategic conversations followed by a collective process of analysis and problem solving. Our partnership enabled engagement for the sharing of experiences, open discussion of underlying problems and free exploration of innovative possibilities for change while fostering a degree of critical consciousness to challenge current practices that deny fast pace and complexity of thought to these gifted learners.

Despite this strong framework for partnership environmental factors still influenced the ongoing maintenance of those relationships. Existing classroom practices and school structures presented some barriers for teachers engaged in this collaborative process for change. Teachers were challenged by having to manage both the class using teacher directed practices and a learner working on a negotiated learning contract. Brad and Stuart commented frequently about the difficulty of giving time to the independent learner but recognised that time together was the key for understanding and partnership. The time required by the independent learner was also challenging for the teacher as the learning was just in time learning requiring a different headspace from teaching to a prepared plan. At times the gifted learner's needs required expertise that was outside the teacher's knowledge or skill base and this put further demands on the teacher's time. All these issues could be managed within a school wide system that was committed to meeting gifted learners needs but within our project this created barriers to partnership and teachers tended to relinquish ownership further and allowed me to manage the learning.

7.1.2. Capability

Task and capability have a simple relationship with engagement. Tasks that are too difficult or that are too easy, ‘switch off’ and are disengaging. Tasks that are targeted at current learning needs are in the zone of proximal development and when they have the support of a more knowledgeable other they help to ‘switch on’ the learner (Vygotsky, 1978).

Zones of proximal development are dependent on cognitive factors and experience and are different for each person and therefore necessitate that tasks are differentiated to meet the needs of individuals. In a classroom of thirty learners this presents a significant challenge for teachers and requires a different mindset from that of schools organised to group and promote students by age. Teaching within the zone of proximal development requires an in depth understanding of the whole learner – their cognitive and organic intellectualism and social and emotional needs.

This research sought to identify learners’ and teachers’ zones of proximal development through our learning conversations and we negotiated a pathway for moving through that zone. The success of that pathway was influenced by the degree of participation in that negotiated process. The more involved the individuals were in the negotiations, the greater the degree of engagement in the learning pathway. Dexter was a key voice in our negotiation of his learning pathway while Brad was a passive observer. Dexter engaged and his reflections indicated some reflexivity. Brad didn’t engage in an active way with Dexter’s video making but did allow classroom time for Dexter to work with me and at times independently to research using the classroom computer. Brad’s reflections were descriptive rather than reflexive indicating further that his engagement was peripheral. Ricky and Stuart were active participants in the negotiation of their learning pathway and actively engaged in the learning processes. The barrier for them was my role as writer of the learning pathway, where my enthusiasm took the learning outside the zone of proximal development for a beginning inquirer. If we had collectively negotiated each step of the inquiry, their ownership would have been assured and we may have avoided moments of disengagement where Ricky actively resisted the learning direction requiring further negotiation to maintain engagement. Stuart engaged as ‘knowledgeable other’ where

he could but was challenged by moments of 'just in time teaching' while also managing his own class programme and senior teacher responsibilities.

Barriers to teaching at the top of the zone of proximal development are time needed to observe and gauge learning progress and for gifted learners working at the top of the zone also meant ready access to expertise and a different set of teaching skills related to inquiry, problem solving and creative thinking. Using negotiated learning opportunities meant that teachers could not control the learning process by offering activities on a predetermined developmental continuum but needed to engage in regular reflective conversations to guide the learner along a broader more flexible learning continuum. I had not foreseen the need to offer teachers the support of a coach to manage this learning curve thinking that by modelling the processes this would happen through osmosis!

7.1.3. Authenticity

Authentic learning is situated learning and emphasises both the cognitive and social aspects of learning. Authentic learning is mediated by a more knowledgeable other and has direct relevance to a learner's life. Authentic learning emerges from the lives of learners and has particular relevance and meaning to learners at a particular point in time. Gaming and movie making were authentic learning contexts for Finn, Ricky and Dexter. The social and emotional need of gifted learners was an authentic learning context for Rachel, Stuart and Brad. Authentic learning is problem posing and engages learners in conversation with others fostering mutual inquiry, as opposed to passive acceptance of facts and official knowledge contained in standardised curriculums and general principles of designated disciplines. Resistance is a typical response to learning that is perceived as irrelevant or subconsciously perceived as shaping a person to be different from whom they are and who they want to be. Disengagement can be viewed as a form of passive resistance.

Authentic learning challenges the dominant culture of the classroom by opening up the possibility for alternative perspectives through the inclusion of less formal learning context such as gaming and movie making. Gaming and movie making brought the culture of the street into the classroom and enhanced the sense of belonging for the learners by valuing their cultural sensibilities and interests. Gaming

and movie making provided a vehicle for more formal learning intentions related to literacy while also providing opportunities for expanding into broader horizons through the development of critical literacy and reflexivity. In the spirit of Dewey (1938), authentic learning places the child at the centre of the curriculum drawing on their lived experience and making the relevance of school immediately apparent since they are engaging school knowledge through the lens of their daily experience.

Authentic learning for teachers is related to teaching experience and teaching pedagogy. Authentic learning for teachers interrogates teaching practice, underlying beliefs, values and knowledge; and challenges teachers to define what they do, why they do it and how effective their teaching practices are in generating learning for all. Rachel and Stuart described the research as an authentic learning process. Rachel openly challenged her teaching practices while Stuart laid the model that we had created alongside his own practice. He saw the value of the negotiated learning pathway as professional development and felt that he may use the process again. Brad as a beginning teacher was in the turmoil of his first year where everything was a learning experience and did not seem to have the head space to stop and reflect on where we had been and possibilities for future directions.

The barrier to authenticity was teachers' perceptions of curriculum. Brad in particular was challenged by the relationship between Dexter's video making and his interpretation of curriculum. For Brad literacy was related to reading a book not viewing a movie. Comprehension was understanding print not video and expressing a message was done through words not images. Over time, Stuart, as a more experienced teacher, was able to shift his assessment of learning beyond the nuts and bolts of language to also include the underlying processes of problem solving and inquiry.

7.1.4. Inquiry

Engaged learning is a process of inquiry involving questioning, exploration, reflection, analysis, the seeking of alternative perspectives and further critical reflection and questioning of beliefs and understandings for possible growth and transformation. This inquiry is an unfolding process stimulated by interest and curiosity. Vygotsky (1978) recognised these meta-cognitive processes as active

conscious processes essential to gaining control of knowledge and for generalising learning to other contexts. My reading of Mezirow, Freire, Schön, Smyth, and Wenger, to understand more deeply the nature of our reflective conversations has developed an understanding of inquiry as meta-cognitive thinking that describes, informs, critically reflects and transforms or resists. At the descriptive and informative phases it shifts learning beyond present understanding and at the critical and transformative/resistant phases it involves a deeper reflexive consciousness of thinking processes. Inquiry phases are not linear, cyclical or orderly. They fold back in on themselves in a constant state of disequilibrium pushing the learner to deeper and wider ways of knowing through a chaotic tumbling of questions and alignment of experiences. Inquiry is enhanced through dialogue that provokes the realisation of these internal thought processes and is evident in conscious resistance to change and actions that are transformative and developmental.

Dexter demonstrated a degree of inquiry when he lay in a puddle to film raindrops falling from the sky. His retelling described his moment of curiosity, his exploration, his damp discoveries that led to an afternoon of discomfort and a video camera requiring a week in a hot water cupboard to dry out. Our analysis involved a discussion concerning the tension between creativity and practicality with the emergence of a creative spirit that was prepared to push the boundaries. I view this as constructive inquiry with Dexter exploring ideas beyond his present understanding.

Rachel revealed a different face to inquiry when she talked about how viewing the theories of action had provoked her to align her practice to Finn's learning style by allowing him more choice and independence in his learning programme with positive outcomes relating to relationship, engagement, work completion and achievement to a high standard. I view this as reflexive inquiry with Rachel scrutinising and challenging her underlying beliefs and values to realign new experiences with past experiences. The translation of this reflexivity into practice is praxis.

As an educational leader I aim to make connections with learner's beliefs, values and experience through co-constructed goals, shared problem solving, and guided practice. The quality of these connections is influenced by the quality of meta-cognitive awareness which in turn is influenced by the quality of questioning that

provokes internal and external conversation. I believe that a barrier to the quality of our reflexivity within the collaborative process for change, was the quality of our questioning to probe, justify and elaborate on what we were doing as we were going. We fell into the trap of “cup filling” as described in Friere’s (1982) banking metaphor for education. I believe this was partly because of the pressures of time and the pressures of other commitments on our head spaces, partly because I did not consciously lead for meta-cognitive awareness and consequently because teachers deferred to me as expert.

The timing of our project across the third and fourth term meant that energies were waning and there was a focus on endings rather than beginnings with fourth term celebrations competing for learners’ and teachers’ attentions. Although, if there had been a school culture of reflective practice then the fourth term would have been an ideal time to consolidate the fragile emergence of thought about supportive learning environments that engage hidden gifted learners because it is through critical reflection on fourth term evaluations that new directions emerge for teaching practice and thought. Schools with a culture of reflective practice are structured so that teachers and learners have the head space to engage reflectively as an integral process to learning and teaching.

My initial lack of knowledge of the discourse related to reflexivity and praxis was also a barrier to successful meta-cognitive awareness and transformation as I was not tuned to the process and consequently missed opportunities to nurture moments of transformation during our reflections. The collaborative process for change provided a framework where change happened but the reflective processes needed to be reflexive with a conscious level of critical questioning to identify how the changes challenged our underlying beliefs and consequent practices. Once these challenges were acknowledged this may have enabled a further cycle of learner and teacher working together to implement negotiated practices to better meet the learning needs of gifted learners in learning spaces that facilitate personal agency and engagement.

My lack of leadership for transformative learning compounded the problem I had with some teachers deferring to me as expert in managing and teaching these learners. I was uncomfortable with this position because my intention was to bring my

experience with gifted education as a single pebble to be laid with the pebbles of teachers and learners in the kettle of our collective knowledge, and through active exploration to grow fresh knowledge about ways of acting. Vygotsky (1978) labels this as inter-subjectivity, Bohm (1996) sees this as dialogue, and I see it as crucial to effective learning, teaching and RTLB work. By deferring to me as expert, teachers missed the opportunity for reflexive thought necessary for exploration of teaching practices for gifted learners and the unfolding of possibilities for effectiveness. They were passively waiting to be cup filled. While true dialogue is a conversation between equals and enables reflexive inquiry into and understanding of, the processes that fragment and interfere with communication. Our failure to consistently engage in dialogue contributed towards our weak reflexivity and consequent lack of evidence of transformative learning.

7.2. Praxis for engagement

For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (Freire, 2005, p. 72).

I have come to understand that reflexivity is crucial for effective learning and this is praxis. I view relationship, capability and authenticity as setting the stage for engagement and reflexive inquiry as the performance of engagement. Within this metaphor educational experience becomes the director of the performance. Classroom and school practices that value passivity, that discourage open conversation, that seek replication of what is in the teacher's head and conformity to knowledge based learning outcomes, do not lead to reflexive thought and learners do not become self critical participants but learn to be passive consumers of information. Participants in this research practiced passive learning processes, were not skilled with reflexivity and consequently did not engage in a reflexive way even though, the foundations for reflexivity were laid in the research methods and even though our conversations were intended to be paralogical thinking spaces that celebrated the organic intellectualism of individuals while fostering reciprocal relationships for critical reflection through dialogue. We did not voice our ideas, we did not own our opinions, we did not

actively talk about how we were making meaning and did not confront our differences of opinion, or generate new ideas by exploring alternative possibilities despite the provocative nature of our strategic conversation and negotiated learning pathways.

In our research we could describe and theorise about our practice as teachers and learners but interrogating and questioning those practices through critical and reconstructive analysis was not a natural part of our reflective processes. Our reflections tended to be focused on how questions rather than what and why questions. For teachers the focus was how to change the learner to be more engaged rather than what is happening that contributes to the disengagement and why. For the student the focus was how to do the work negotiated rather than what is important learning and why. For me the focus was how to facilitate a collective process for change rather than what makes change and why. My questions as leader of reflexive processes, needed to be more about what was happening and why was this happening. In this way our attention would have been focused within the critical realm.

We started our research by describing our beliefs and values as underlying assumptions and then we identified inconsistencies and incoherence in our theories of action before our negotiated learning pathways challenged taken for granted classroom practices and assumptions about giftedness. But then, we responded reflectively according to our habits by continuing to describe without engaging in critical and reconstructive analysis. As Smyth describes habit has a flattening effect by being soothing, non-productive and anxiety free. By failing to engage critically we were continuing to accept the everyday reality of the classroom and teachers were continuing to concentrate on finding the most efficient means to achieve an ends to manage these gifted learners rather than challenging the lock step way in which teaching is organised so as to revisit the 'zoo chow' (Tolan, 1996) that is fed to our gifted learners.

Praxis is informed by reflexivity, a process of describing, informing, dialoguing and reconstructing. It is a process of disequilibrium whereby reflexive practitioners are critically aware and in tune with multiple ways of knowing, seeking inclusive understandings and practices that continually challenge personal beliefs and values. Reflexive practitioners, 'praxitioners' (Mayo, 2003), are cradled in a process of

participatory action research, engaging in cycles of action, reflection, adjustment, further action and theorising about local situations.

For the participants in our research to have engaged reflexively, we needed to create opportunity for developing the performance of reflexivity through critical dialogue and reconstruction. We needed to revisit our theories of action to consciously examine how thinking processes and practices were changing or forming as a result of exposure to each other and alternative ways of practising. We needed to continue the conversation and we needed to seek out and confront continuing incoherence or inconsistencies. We needed to acknowledge our differences because our experiences were different and we needed to confront the beliefs that were preventing us from creating inclusive environments. Our on-going conversations needed to be supported by a critical perspective similar to Brookfield's (1995) critical incident questionnaire and mindful of Smyth's (1992) warnings concerning hegemonic possibilities within reflective practice whereby reflection becomes a means of focusing upon ends determined by others, not an active process of contesting, debating, and determining the nature of those ends.

Currently, teaching often fails to recognise the uniqueness of gifted learners' social and emotional experience and their different learning characteristics. Instead learning behaviour is viewed through the lens of typical learners, and subconsciously we assume that the way the world is, is the way we view it. Through this research we have explored a possibility for engaging with hidden gifted learners to recognise their unique social, emotional and cognitive characteristics. We have used problem based methodology as a framework for negotiating learner pathways based on authentic areas of learning connected to learners' interests and learning needs. Through partnership, negotiation and action research we revealed pieces of the 'me' behind the mask and generated small shifts in thinking for both learners and teachers. The sustainability of these changes remains to be seen and I would feel more confident if we had managed to be more reflexive within our learning.

Changes brought to life through reflexivity are responsive to cultures of difference; they are reflective of an expanded world view and are inclusive of socially conscious practices. Actions born of reflexivity are praxis (Glass, 2001; Mayo, 2003). Action

emerging from reflexive partnerships is collective praxis. Collective praxis is a shift away from the notion that theory is applied in practice and is a move toward an understanding of theory as emerging in our lived practice. As RTLB I see my role as a facilitator of collective praxis and I will discuss this further in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

The Beginning Again

*they placed their pebbles innocently
glistening with unknown potential
rich
remnants of their past
voices
stories
collections of wisdom
(Reflective Journal, 2009)*

This research emerges from the “swamplands of classroom practice” (Mayo, 2003, p14). It is collective and builds on insights from the “theoretical high ground” (Mayo, 2003, p.14). Why swamplands? Because swamplands are rich fertile grounds of complex ecologies, co-existing together in the same way that classrooms are complex environments of multiple voices and multiple theories struggling for meaning. Swamplands also acknowledge the complex and at times overwhelming nature of teaching and learning. Swamplands of practice are valued for their communality, their paralogic and the potential for growth that they bring. In some way, swamplands describe an original place that complements this research as a bottom up process of understanding. This research is firmly situated in the local, draws on the academic voice about giftedness to feed back into local, individualised, situated case studies. The academic voice is positioned beside the voices of learners and teachers and these are recognised as one of many voices that contribute to our understanding of these cases - families, colleagues, school leaders and school communities.

8.1. Questions and answers

The questions for this research were guided by an intention to research changing perspectives and relationships. They were:

In what way does a collaborative process for change facilitate intellectual engagement for hidden gifted learners, their teachers and a Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour?

How does an understanding of the social and emotional characteristics of giftedness facilitate intellectual engagement for hidden gifted learners?

I also considered

In what way is a collaborative process for change collective praxis?

Analysis of our interactions looked for openness to alternative perspectives and sought subsequent changes to learning engagement and teaching practice. The understandings that emerged from the research were shaped by our interactions within a school context and the research process.

I started with a framework for facilitating a process of negotiation between learners and teachers to possibly address issues of engagement for a group of hidden gifted learners. I had the aim of helping learners and teachers better understand giftedness and in particular the uniqueness of social and emotional characteristics of hidden gifted students. Participatory Action Research and Problem Based Methodology defined our research framework and over a period of fifteen weeks I worked closely with six pairs of students and teachers. We engaged in one action research cycle and four conversational phases. The initial phase was a learning conversation that provided the information for our theories of action. The second phase involved a strategic conversation where we collectively analysed the action theories to inform possibilities for improved learning through negotiated learning pathways. The third phase consisted of the trialling of negotiated pathways and feedback conversations where insights were fed back into the learning actions to maximise opportunities for engagement and learning. We concluded the research cycle with a reflective conversation where I sought evaluative feedback on the process and evidence of changed understanding of giftedness. My analysis of those conversations revealed a shift towards engagement, with positive changes in how gifted learners were perceived within the school community and how gifted learners perceived themselves within the learning community. There were differences in how students and teachers reflected on the changes. Some described events, others described relationships and a few described changed ways of being. With this insight I embarked on a Winnie the Pooh sort of 'wondering' to an undefined place, in an unknown direction, with a long line of everybody and a beginners guide to expotitioning (Milne, 1994/1928). These

wonderings start with an insight and then build to a new insight and with the thoughtful contributions of others lead to an action and then ultimately to understanding.

8.2. A wondering: A journey into collective praxis

My starting point on this ‘wondering’ was change theory. I was challenged by my lack of understanding of change processes despite having been immersed in change processes for fifteen years as a classroom teacher and three years as RTLB working with marginalised learners. The first travellers to join my long line of everyone were the academic voices of Mezirow, Fullan, Hargreaves and Schon. The pebbles of insight gained from their writings helped me to formulate a four phase rubric for change and this supported my reflection on the nature of change evident in our reflective conversations. It became clear that our reflective processes were mainly descriptive as opposed to transformative. On the few occasions where transformative reflection was evident, the nature of the changes were connected to new ways of understanding and new ways of teaching and I came to understand that change is confrontational, requiring us to confront our underlying beliefs and assumptions. By default this confrontation is dialogical. We transform our thinking in dialogue with others. Our transformative others may be colleagues, students, families, or academics and with this understanding another pebble was added to my *kete o te waananga* (basket of knowledge) in the form of hidden gifted learners as transformative others. I now understand their resistance to classroom engagement as a confrontational voice challenging the beliefs, values and understandings of teaching practice and consequently having the potential for new insight and transformed ways of teaching. Further ‘wonderings’ and processes of critical self reflection led me towards an emerging understanding of reflexivity. There seemed to be a natural progression from recognising the four phases of transformative change to recognising reflexivity as the catalyst for action. Reflexivity is described as engagement in dialogical processes to critically examine how our values, beliefs, and experiences influence our actions and how our actions also influence our values, beliefs and experiences and how we practice with self-awareness. Our learning conversations and subsequent analysis in our strategic conversations leading to negotiated learning pathways were reflexive processes but these processes were not replicated in our reflective conversations and consequently there was little evidence of reflexivity in our reflections. Through this

research I have come to understand how reflexivity is the essence of engagement and participation. Great learners are able to gaze back upon themselves to clarify and examine underlying beliefs, values and understandings, they are reflexive. Actions based on reflexivity are transformative. Another pebble is added to my kete and it is a pebble of reflexivity.

Wonderings are pragmatic and need pragmatic tools. Learning conversations, case studies, strategic conversations, negotiated learning pathways and reflexive frameworks emerged as pragmatic tools within the research and they identified patterns of potentiality. These tools recognised the socially constructed nature of knowledge and power; they fostered collective meaning making and focused attention on praxis. Our negotiations were praxis and the teaching practices that emerged from our negotiations were praxis. Praxis is a reflexive approach to taking action. It is a critical consciousness about what we are doing, it seeks to be inclusive of marginalised voices and it informs critical pedagogy which is an engaged pedagogy because it listens to alternative voices and is inclusive of organic intellectualism, the lived experiences of others. Another pebble is placed in my kete as I embrace the collective power of praxis.

My wonderings are recursive and I gaze back upon my practice as RTLB. I have repositioned myself as praxitioner working in partnership with learners, their families, teachers and school leaders. As praxitioner, I have led for praxis and have sought the emergence of innovative practices that acknowledge difference, nurture diversity and support paralogical, reflexive processes for engagement. I have led for collective praxis and this research suggests possibilities for developing spaces for collective praxis through learning conversations, case studies, strategic conversations, negotiated learning pathways, reflexive frameworks and participatory action research. These tools are critical, reflexive lenses that facilitate the hearing of multiple voices and the co-creation of possibilities for change in situations of socially constructed injustice and I believe, would better serve RTLB as praxitioners managing for structural changes that embrace diversity and inclusiveness.

These thoughts lead me to consider the ecological model that guides RTLB practice and think about an ethnological model that would reposition RTLB as ethnological researchers within an ecological landscape as opposed to observer outside. An

ethnological model acknowledges the experience of RTLB as praxtitioners and enables a partnership for praxis which is different from the ecological model that positions RTLB as knowledgeable other and collaborative practice. An ethnological model emerged from our research as a possibility that would enable RTLB to explore the complexities of teaching and learning processes and to collectively and reflexively experiment with possibilities for change while co-creating pathways for future learning and engagement. Another pebble was added to my kete and this pebble represented the immersed voice of ethnology. My kete is now the kete of a postmodern praxitioner and I have pebbles to offer for an inclusive, engaged pedagogy for change.

8.3. Revealing the ‘me’ behind the mask

As this research explored factors that influence student’s decision to participate, and teacher’s understandings of hidden giftedness, we came to understand the need to create spaces that acknowledged difference. The creation of these spaces within current school structures was provocative. These spaces were differentiated to the extreme and were critical of current practice. They were aware of hegemonic dynamics and were transformative in process. The learning spaces emerged in partnership with teachers and learners, enabled voice, listened to voice, spoke side by side, listened to the telling of stories, sought connections through shared perspectives, and valued voices for their uniqueness. The measure of success for these learning space was a rich tapestry of diversity that embraced difference and which crossed borders to challenge, remap, and rewrite education boundaries. As we discovered the strands of interdependence and interconnectedness within our research we revealed and broke the strings that bound and constrained our transformation. In that space we started the process that made it safe for individuals to be different and we had glimpses of the ‘me’ behind the mask as learners engaged, challenged, and created. But the sustainability of these spaces within current school structures was challenging and as reflected upon, without the additional support of a reflexive environment to nurture and grow such challenges to the status quo, then change would only ever be momentary.

This research is but a small gift, a collection of pebbles in a flax kete. It is a gift of love born from a strong desire to tell the story of the gifted learners who have allowed me to be part of their learning journey and who have been part of mine. The strength of this research will be in the unknown commonalities that readers may find as they select pebbles of insight for their kete and each pebble will take on its own unique story. This research does not seek to impose but has the potential to grow in a rhizomic way at ground level, in a way which at this point is unknown. In this way this is not an ending but a beginning, a beginning again....

E hi noa ana, na te aroha: Although it (the gift) be small, it is a gift of love.

Ahakoā he iti he pounamu: Although it is small, it is greenstone.

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Appendix 1

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness:

Revealing the ‘Me behind the Mask.’

Principal Information Sheet

Dear

Thank you for considering participation of teachers and students in my research related to improving the classroom participation of gifted underachievers. The research is being undertaken as part of my study for a Master of Teaching and Learning degree at Christchurch College of Education. Through the study I will be supervised by Dr Janinka Greenwood and Jenny Smith, lecturers in the University of Canterbury, College of Education.

I plan to work with teachers and gifted students identified as underachieving who participated in the Oho Ake Rangatahi Mentor workshops. We will work together to explore programme options and develop learning pathways that may improve participation in school. Through the critical reflection on participants ‘theories of action’, it is proposed that learners, teachers and researcher will benefit from a deeper understanding of the social and emotional characteristics of gifted underachievers and the way these characteristics influence participation in the classroom.

The research will involve meetings with teachers to discuss classroom experiences, understanding of the student and to identify possible directions. These conversations will be audiotaped and will become the data for the research. During the research,

teachers and students will be asked to reflect on how things are going to help me identify whether anything changes with the approach to the child's learning. I will negotiate contact time with teachers and will reimburse them for the use of their non-contact time.

I will also observe classroom practice so that I am familiar with teaching styles and programmes. The process is intended to be very collaborative and teachers and pupils will be actively involved in all decisions.

I will make every attempt to keep the information anonymous when sharing with others. Any direct quotations used in publication will not be attributed to teachers, students or schools involved in the research. Teachers and students have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage. All information will be stored on my computer or backup disks which are secured with a password for five years. After five years the information will be destroyed. I may use this research for conference presentations or research articles as well as my thesis for my Masters of Teaching and Learning.

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact me on 09 827 3394 or rmcallum@kit.ac.nz or to my supervisor Jenny Smith (03 3458274) from the University of Canterbury College of Education. If you have any complaints you may also contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee; see contact details below.

Ultimately this project is about raising student achievement through collaborative problem solving. Thank you for thinking about helping me with this research I am looking forward to working in your school.


Please complete the attached consent form and I will collect it when we arrange our first meeting.

Teachers and students involved are:

Sincere thanks

Ruth McAllum

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury College of Education Ethical Clearance Committee.
2. Complaints may be addressed to:
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Ethical Clearance Committee
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 03 348 3482 
UNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Wāitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden giftedness: Revealing the 'Me Behind the Mask'.

Appendix 2

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden giftedness:

Revealing the 'Me behind the Mask.'

Principal Consent Form

I have read or heard the information about the project.

I am willing to allow teachers to share information about their teaching, reflect on the problem of underachievement and contribute to discussions about strategies that might make a difference for students.

I am willing for teachers and students to participate in the implementation of strategies collectively decided on.

I am willing for teachers and students to collect information that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies.

I am willing for information to be shared in research reports, conferences and articles.

I understand that teachers and students can change their mind about taking part in the research.

I understand that the identity of the school, teachers and students will be protected from people outside the research group.

Name: _____

Date : _____

Signature: _____

Please return this form to Ruth McAllum, RTLB Kelston Intervention Team.

3. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury College of Education Ethical Clearance Committee.

4. Complaints may be addressed to:

Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Ethical Clearance Committee

College of Education, University of Canterbury

Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 345 8312

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden giftedness: Revealing the 'Me Behind the Mask'.

Appendix 3

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness:

Revealing the 'Me Behind the Mask'.

Information for Parents/Caregivers

Dear

My name is Ruth McAllum and I am a student at the University of Canterbury College of Education. I am also the coordinator of the Oho Ake Rangatahi Project with the Kelston Intervention Team. I have worked with your child in the past, exploring their social and emotional characteristics and the relationship to their learning. I am currently researching the learning experiences of gifted children who are underachieving and I would like your child to participate in this research.

The child will be interviewed and their responses will be audiotaped. I will be asking for their ideas about learning and what they do at school. Your child, their teacher and I will use this information to plan learning pathways with the aim of extending their participation and learning experiences. At the same time I will be researching my methods and will report on the effectiveness in my research.

Each of the students and teachers will have a code name so no-one else outside the school community and the research team will know who made the comments I use in my report of this research. The research team will be your child's teacher, your child, the school's RTLB, Dr Eng Leong Lim (manager of the Kelston Intervention Team) and myself. All information will be

stored for five years on my computer or backup disks which are secured with a password. After five years the information will be destroyed. I may use this research for conference presentations or research articles as well as my thesis for my Masters of Teaching and Learning.

If you agree for your child to take part in the research, please sign the consent form below. I have also given your child a letter and consent form to sign.

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact me on 09 827 3394 or rmcallum@kit.ac.nz or contact my supervisor Jenny Smith (03 3458274) from the University of Canterbury College of Education. If you have any complaints you may also contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee; see contact details below.

If your child changes their mind about sharing their ideas with me, that's fine, too; all they have to do is say so.

Thank you for thinking about helping me. I am looking forward to working with your child.

Sincere thanks

Ruth McAllum

Signed: _____
University of Canterbury College of Education

Date: _____

5. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury College of Education Ethical Clearance Committee.
6. Complaints may be addressed to:
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Ethical Clearance Committee
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH
Telephone: 345 8312

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness: Revealing the 'Me Behind the Mask'.

Appendix 4

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness:

Revealing the 'Me Behind the Mask'.

Parent/Caregiver Consent Form

I give permission for _____ to participate in the research project based on understanding gifted underachievers.

I have read and understood the information given to me about the research project and what will be required of my child/the child in my care.

I have discussed the project with _____ and am happy that he/she understands what he/she will be asked to do and that he/she can withdraw at any stage.

I understand that anything my child says during this research discussion will be treated as confidential and that findings that could identify my child or his/her school will not be published.

I understand the information may be used in research reports, conferences and articles.

I understand that participation in this project is voluntary and that I can withdraw my child or he/she can withdraw from the project at any time without repercussions.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please return this form along with the student's consent form to [name of person] (the project coordinator at your child's school).

7. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury College of Education Ethical Clearance Committee.
8. Complaints may be addressed to:
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Ethical Clearance Committee
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 345 8312

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden giftedness: Revealing the 'Me Behind the Mask'.

Appendix 5

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness:

Revealing the 'Me behind the Mask.'

Student Information Sheet

Dear

Hello. My name is Ruth and I am a student at the University of Canterbury, College of Education. I have also worked with you as a Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour in the Oho Ake Rangatahi Project. I am researching children's learning and I would like your help.

I will be talking to you about your learning at school. I really want to know what you think, so all your answers will be important. I will also be asking your teacher about your learning and we will work with you to plan your learning experiences.

I will audio-tape the conversations we have and will record the main ideas of what we talk about. I will share these records with you and you will be able to correct and clarify ideas at any stage if you feel unhappy about the way they are worded.

During the research I will ask you to reflect on how things are going and get you to help me identify whether anything changes. I will also observe you in the classroom and keep observational notes which I will share with you. All data from these conversations and observations will be used in my research and will be shared with your teacher, my research supervisors, and my work colleagues who will help me to make decisions related to your learning and my research methods.

I will make every attempt to keep the information anonymous when sharing with people outside the research team. People in your class and school will probably be aware that you are part of this research. When I write my report you will be able to choose a code-name so no-one else will know what you said. All information will be stored on my computer or backup disks which are secured with a password for five years. After five years the information will be destroyed. I may use this research for

conference presentations or research articles as well as my thesis for my Masters of Teaching and Learning.

If you have any questions about this project, you can talk to your parents or to your teacher. You can also ask me any questions when I come to interview you. If you change your mind about sharing your ideas with me, that's fine, too. All you have to do is say so and you can go back to your classroom.

Thank you for thinking about helping me. I am looking forward to meeting you.

If you agree to take part in the research, please sign the consent form. I have also sent your parents and teacher a letter and consent form to sign.

I look forward to working with you.

Sincere thanks

Ruth McAllum

9. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury College of Education Ethical Clearance Committee.

10. Complaints may be addressed to:

Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Ethical Clearance Committee
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 345 8312

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness: Revealing the 'Me Behind the Mask'.

Appendix 6

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness: Revealing the 'Me behind the Mask.'

Student Consent Form

I have read or heard the information about the project.

I have talked to my parents/caregivers about it.

I agree to talk to the researchers.

I am happy for the discussion to be taped.

I am happy for information to be shared in research reports, conferences and articles.

I understand that anything I say during discussions will be confidential and that findings that could identify me or my school will not be published.

I understand that I can change my mind about taking part in the discussion and no-one will mind.

I know that if I have any questions I can ask my parents or caregivers, my teacher or the researcher.

Name: _____

Date : _____

Signature: _____

Please return this form to [name of person] (the project coordinator at your school).

11. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury College of Education Ethical Clearance Committee.

12. Complaints may be addressed to:

Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Ethical Clearance Committee
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 345 8312

A Problem Based Approach to Hidden Giftedness: Revealing the 'Me Behind the Mask'.

Appendix 7

Questions to guide the Learning Conversation

Teacher

How would you describe (student)?

How are you finding working with (student)?

What do you think (student) can do?

What do you think are the barriers to participation?

What are you currently doing to meet (student's) learning needs?

What have you tried that worked?

What have you tried that didn't work? Why do you think it didn't work?

What would you like to see happen?

Goals for (student)

How would you like these goals to be achieved?

Student (Photographs from the camera for a day activity used as stimulus)

Tell me about your day?

Describe the best part of your day?

What do you like about school?

Describe the worst part of your day?

If you could change school how would you change it?

What do you love learning about the most?

What do you find the most difficult thing to do at school?

Appendix 8

Questions to guide the Reflective Conversation

Teacher

How has this research process made a difference for you as a teacher?

How has this research process made a difference for your student?

How has the process changed your understanding of giftedness?

What do you think was the significant factor that made the difference?

What were the barriers?

How would you improve the process?

What do you see as the next step for you as a teacher?

What do you see as the next step for this student?

Student

How has this research made a difference for you as a learner?

How has this research made a difference for your teacher?

What have you learnt about yourself?

What do you think was the key factor that made a difference for your learning?

What do you think were barriers to your learning?

How would you improve the process?

What do you see as the next step for you as a learner?

What is the next step for your teacher?

Appendix 9

Example of a theory of action.

Key: Social Academic Perfectionism Motivational Health Visual spatial Characteristics Excitability Intensity Sensitivity

Finn		
Shapers	Actions	Consequences
The tech teacher's a wanker	At tech drawing we just get a card and have to copy it out	Don't like tech, Don't like drawing at all
Important to understand the point of what we do	Don't see the point of what we do at tech	I don't do it
	School is sitting around listening to teacher yak on about stuff I already know	School is very boring and very painful
	Maths is repetitive Already understand circumferences and perimeters	Maths particularly boring
I don't easily come by inspiration for ideas	Need inspiration for ideas to be a game creator Called up a gaming company and from the credits to find out what a game tester was	Don't think I want to be a game creator Want to be a Game tester
	Want to learn about computers and how they work. Favourite Game Jak 2 Only use the computer to write stuff up	I am interested in finding out about programming. I like computer work Boring

<p>Strengths: I can think things through logically. Not sure of my weaknesses</p>	<p>Usually when I don't want to sleep I sit there and come up with random problems in our house and see if I can solve them</p> <p>Do well in Maths, reading, gaming Read a lot, read mostly violent stuff – violent fantasy-Halo series, Cherub series, Keys of the Kingdom series</p> <p>I was writing a news article for the school newspaper – couldn't think of anything so thought I'd let you know that it was boring</p> <p>Come to school because I am forced to by my Mum and the law. I would rather stay at home and play on play station</p>	<p>Would be fun to be challenged for once</p>
<p>Antisocial a bit</p>	<p>Prefer to be with people my own age or younger <i>(but agreed that if he was accelerated a year he could fit into a class because they would accept him as being smart)</i></p>	<p>if I am anti social it prevents bullying</p> <p>Want to be a game tester <i>(became animated, explaining what a game tester does)</i></p>
<p>Kids need options of what they could do.</p>	<p>If I had choice of what you do in reading and writing I would engage</p> <p>Flexibility in day</p>	<p>Engagement</p> <p>Enjoyment</p>

<p>Compliment circle isn't really a fun game</p> <p>Everyone who gets me in compliment circle are people who hate me.</p>	<p>I find it agitating that I always get Brad Brad is AKA never a good person. Once in a blue moon he is a good person.</p> <p>Others have problems making up compliments for me – they grunt when they flip the card.</p> <p>When I first came to this school I was pretty popular and then they were insulting some kid and I started to hang out with him and then I became unpopular. Everyone who hates me gangs up on me and that's pretty much it Get on with Leo.</p> <p>Worst learning experience; being the new kid.</p>	<p>I'm not exactly Mr popular in the whole school, I don't know why.</p> <p>I come to school because I am a punching bag for several people.</p>
<p>School needs an electronics room to enable people to bring their gear.</p>	<p>Lunch time is good because I get to eat Lunch time also very boring because there is nothing to do.</p>	
<p>Comfortable with my own space</p>	<p>Got on with James because we were the smart ones in the class and we were able to be bored together waiting for others to catch up.</p> <p>Joy (<i>librarian</i>) is taking me to an author who is coming to the local library.</p>	

Appendix 10

Rubric for analysis of transformation - Teacher

Focus of change	Descriptive <i>Self focused Routine description</i>	Informative <i>Describes underlying beliefs, values and habits of mind and philosophies</i>	Dialogical <i>Cycles of questions and actions, consideration of other perspectives, new insights</i>	Transformative <i>Fundamental questions and evidence of change</i>
Understanding of social and emotional characteristics of hidden gifted learners <i>(Shaping to accommodating)</i>	They are rejected	The learner is egocentric Rejected because of their differences Poor social skills Instrumental knowledge	I don't really understand a gifted child's perspective Learning may be not motivating Learning may not be of sufficient challenge My teaching style may not connect with the learner Communicative Knowledge	Gifted learners view the world differently Gifted learners are intense, excitable and sensitive Working in partnership with learners enables supportive programming These learners have different social and emotional needs These learners respond to a challenging environment Emancipatory knowledge
Relationship practices/ perspectives <i>(Controlling, blaming to</i>	The programme works for others, if this child is smart it should be easy for them	Identify the cause of the child's problem and change that.	Listen to the learner Learn from the learner	Work with the learner Curriculum is only one set of worthwhile knowings

<i>partnership, trusting)</i>		Find the motivators and use to get compliance Punish/ignore undesired behaviours	Read gifted theorists and educationalists - Renzulli and Silverman Curriculum can be a tool for power and control Critical self reflection	Open to alternative ways of knowing Praxis – reflexivity
Learning practices/ perspectives <i>(Disengagement, boredom to engaged, motivated)</i>	Compliance Reward and Punishment Cup filling – expect assimilation	Use effective strategies to manage and control behaviour Shape the learner to conform to classroom culture	Listen and respond to alternative perspectives Critically reflect to hear the hidden, lost voices	Negotiate Emphasise the personal nature of student-teacher interactions Restorative
Teaching practices/ perspectives <i>(Management to empowerment Disconnected to connected)</i>	Teach to the middle		Critically aware of how assumptions have constrained perceptions and teaching	Facilitator of learning Guides and directs students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging them to develop criteria to make informed choices

Appendix 11

Rubric for analysis of transformation - Learner

Focus of change	Routine <i>Self focused</i> <i>Disengaged from change</i>	Technical <i>Instrumental description</i>	Dialogic <i>Cycles of questions and actions, consideration of other perspectives, new insights</i>	Transformative <i>Fundamental questions and evidence of change</i>
Understanding of social and emotional characteristics of hidden gifted learners <i>(Shaping to accommodating)</i>	Work is boring No friends They don't like me I am unacceptable	I want to learn about.... They don't understand me I am different	I am interested in different things How can I make this work more interesting? I have a novel perspective on the world and it is valuable How am I different	I need to engage in a different way with the work that is given. It's ok to experiment and suggest alternatives. Its OK to be different I can be different alongside others I have friends who are different like me Reflective conversations
Relationship practices/ perspectives <i>(Controlling, blaming to partnership, trusting)</i>	Avoidance Resistance – ignore requests to comply Non compliance –refusal to comply	Articulate current behaviours and assumptions	Recognition of limitations of current learning behaviours Experimentation with alternative approaches	Suggest alternatives

			through discourse with teachers and others	
Learning practices/ perspectives <i>(Disengagement, boredom to engaged, motivated)</i>	Comply Avoid Resist Assimilate information Disengage	I am bored because this is not my interest This is boring because I do not see the point to it. They don't understand me and are intolerant of difference at times They are not my close friends because they are different from me	Learning outside my area of interest is OK I can link new learning to my interests I am responsible for my boredom Others don't intentionally set out to be boring My disengagement is the voice of resistance	Able to negotiate Reflective Persistent Autonomous learner Engaged
Teaching practices/ perspectives <i>(Management to empowerment Disconnected to connected)</i>	Teaching is inflexible Teaching is about doing it one way – the teachers way Teachers are in control of my learning			There are multiple ways of knowing I am in control of my learning